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The narrated social and sexual experiences of black gay university students who have sex in the closet.

By

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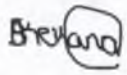
A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Social & Psychological Research 2017.

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Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university

Signed: 15 March 2017



.....

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...skeleton in closet

Secrets,
they eventually come out.
Secrets we all know them,
others of our own; some of others.

We all have skeletons in our closets
skeletons so well hidden
because their coming out will bring different perceptions
Some people have few skeletons; others drudges of them.
But I have only one...

I
am the skeleton in my closet
like a reptile in a hole during winter, I stay in my closet afraid of the cold cruel world.
I wait for spring so I can leave this closet,
stretch out and enjoy the pleasures of the sun's light.

But I am here, it is dark and depressingly enclosed.
I am the skeleton in my closet
captivated by feelings of uncertainty, gloom and restrain.

I desire to be,
to acquire freedom.
I wish not to fear the criticism.
But to confirm that I am also human.
I thirst the waters of liberty and hunger to come out and show the person I am,
the person inside of me.
The real me, that the world fails to know.

You'll ask me "Why don't you just come out then?"
But you see, a callous, critical, hating, heartless, hurting, wicked world awaits,
ready to be quick in judgement but slow in assessing the facts of life.

Do you see now how the closet 'though dark and limited, offers a sense of comfort and protection

against the quick unresearched judgements and the pain that comes forth from the world?

There are some like me who also hide in their closets fearful to come out and face the obstacles that await.
I have thus resolved that I'm well secure and safe in my closet.
In here I have analysed, learned and understood so much of myself and can now understand the feelings of those like me.

In my closet, I have learned to love and accept myself and hope the world will do the same when I'm ready to come out. When I feel it is safe enough-like a tortoise that shows its head out of its shell- I will come out and face the world.

I am the skeleton in my closet.
I am a living secret
However, I hope to leave the closet one day and be heard.
But, unlike some who come out yet hide under the world's expectations,
I hope to come out true, real, free and relaxed like the clouds above.

I am the skeleton in my closet,
I am a prisoner of the world's fate
but hope not to die a ghost.

(a poem by Putuke Kekana, 2008)

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to enquire on the narratives of black gay South African university students who are 'in the closet' i.e. their parents do not know about their sexuality only a few trusted friends within the university space. These narratives focused on their social and sexual experiences which involved their interactions within the university as black gay men in the closet. Four black gay students from two Johannesburg universities aged 21 to 24 participated in this study. The study made use of a qualitative research design grounded in Narrative Theory. Unstructured interviews were conducted and the collected narratives were analysed using Narrative Analysis. Each participant narrated different individual experiences of the university space as well as how they negotiated their sexual practices as gay men who are in the closet. The participants offered knowledge about the university spaces that they occupied as well as the communities in which they were raised. The participants' narratives highlight the intersectional challenges black gay men from township and rural South Africa endure because of social constructs of heteronormativity, hegemonic masculinity, religious intolerance and homophobia, all which were perpetuated within these spaces. These challenges also affected their sexual experiences; influencing their lack of interest in sexual intercourse. The study highlights the importance of creating safe spaces for gay people to express their sexuality visibly. The study argues that visibility can challenge social ills experienced by gay people within university spaces and the country at large.

Key words: Gay, black university students, hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity, coming out, South Africa

Glossary

Black

The term black can be contentiously defined as the membership to an African cultural group and skin colour. There are various socio-political disagreements to this definition (Coetzee & Roux, 1998).

Coming out

Coming out is viewed as a developmental process in gay people's identity development in which they make the decision to disclose their sexual orientation (Cass, 1984: Herdt & Boxer, 1993).

Femiphobia

A discriminatory term that denotes negative attitudes towards effeminate gay men; it is often used synonymously with the terms femmephobia which denotes a rejection of femininity in anyone (Miller & Behm-Morawitz, 2016).

Gay

Gay is an accommodating term that is used to define individuals with same-sex desires. It is synonymous with the term homosexuality but it is often used to refer to male homosexuals(APA,2008).

Hegemonic masculinity

Amongst various definitions, hegemonic masculinity can be viewed as a socially constructed ideal form of masculinity. This form of masculinity can be understood as a pattern of actions, behavioural expectations and identities that enforce a sense of power over femininity and other forms of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Heterosexism

A belief system perpetuated by norms, cultural scripts and language which favours heterosexuality over homosexuality (Berkman & Zinberg, 1997)

Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is the ideology that normal sexuality is defined by complimentary heterosexual categories on gender (i.e. men and women) leading to alternative forms of sexuality to be marginalised (Weinzimmer & Twill, 2015).

Homophobia

Homophobia can be defined as explicit or implicit hostility towards an individual or group who are homosexual or perceived to be homosexual. Homophobia can take the form of not only through physical violence but also verbal and abusive language (Thomas, Mience, Masson & Bernoussi, 2014)

Homosexuality

Homosexuality can be defined as "the manifestation of sexual desire towards a member of one's own sex or the erotic activity with a member of the same sex" (Ekwo, 2010, p. 3)

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is a contentious term that can be defined as an integration of an individual's attractions (emotional or erotic), their self-labelling and sexual interactions with people of a certain sex or gender.

Sexuality

Sexuality can be defined as an integration between an individual's sexual behaviour and sexual attractions and desire towards a certain gender (Schwartz & Rutter, 2000). It is used interchangeably with sexual orientation in this report.

Sex

Sex is a physical indicator of one's biological status at birth; it is characterised typically by genitalia and hormones. Sex is categorised as male, female or intersex. It is different from gender which is a social and cultural construct that is usually based on sex and behavioural traits. Additionally, sex is characterised by procreation and erotic pleasure (APA, 2015)

Sex roles

Sex roles are labels that are used by gay people in identifying their preferred sexual practices (Kiguwa, 2015; Gil, 2007). The labels 'top' or 'bottom' are usually used in describing the sexual practices of gay men as well as their behaviour and identification (Kiguwa, 2015). The

top partner is the insertive partner during anal sex and the bottom partner is the receptive partner (Kiguwa, 2015; Gil, 2007). The labels bring forth verbs such as 'bottoming' and 'toping'.

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

This chapter will present a social background of South African black gay men's narratives. Emerging from the background, the research aims, research questions and rationale for the study will be discussed. The chapter will end off with a conclusion.

Background

"Understanding the different cultural and sexual scripts amongst black men who have sex with men (MSM) in South Africa requires a critical engagement with the narrative scripts informing many discriminatory practices against homosexuality more generally" (Kiguwa, 2005, p.119). This is most apparent within young, gay, black university students. Before they arrive at university, at a typical age of 19 years old, many university students have internalised at least some negative scripts from the communities in which they grew up (Arndt & de Bruin, 2006). These negative scripts form part of the reasons behind the discrimination that gay students experience from their peers and other social groups within South African universities (Arndt & de Bruin, 2006). It is thus crucial to interrogate the broader social and cultural backgrounds of black gay university students that inform how they narrate their experiences.

There is a distinction between the lived experiences of inclusion and acceptance of black gay people and that of white gay people in the South African communities in which they live (Graziano, 2004a; Moolman, 2013; Visser, 2013). This distinction is due to intersectional factors such as race, gender and socio-economic statuses that are employed from South Africa's history of oppression (Graziano, 2004a; Nel & Judge, 2008). More black people live in 'black communities' that are characterised by lower socio-economic status and are entrenched with a different culture from white people in South Africa (Kenyon, Osbak, Buyze, Johnson & Lankveld, 2015; Nel & Judge, 2008; Visser, 2013). Some black gay people in South Africa grew up or live in impecunious communities (mainly rural or township areas) with little formal education (Kenyon et al., 2015) as well as insufficiently trained healthcare providers to assist in gay-related health concerns (Graziano, 2004a). Negative statements by healthcare providers hinder some gay people to discuss their sexual practices and from acquiring health-related knowledge about their sexual practices (Collier, Sandfort, Reddy, & Lane, 2015). This has an

influence on gay men's acceptance of themselves because the social support such as a lack of knowledge within the community and access to adequate healthcare information remains restricted (Graziano, 2004a). These black communities are entrenched with a culture that perpetuates masculinity (Ritcher & Morrell, 2006) and heterosexism (Graziano, 2004a, Wells & Polders, 2008) while punishing homosexuality for its inability to conform with traditional norms (Mkhize, Bennett, Reddy & Moletsane, 2010; Msibi, 2009)

Some of the households in these black communities are overcrowded. This has resulted in reports of young gay men feeling victimised by sharing a sleeping area with male relatives and others being molested (Graziano, 2004a). Black gay men are reluctant to report sexual violence against them when it is based on their sexual orientation because these reports are often mocked and dismissed by police (Graziano, 2004a; Nel & Judge, 2008). Some black communities hold the misperception that homosexuality is a middle class, unnatural Western import that is foreign to Africa (de Vos, 2015). As such, many black gay people have their sexual orientation denied acknowledgment in their culture and endure discrimination, violence and exclusion (Cock, 2003; de Vos, 2015; Reid, 2003). Anti-gay statements made by some African political leaders in Zimbabwe, Namibia, Swaziland and Uganda perpetuate this notion of homosexuality being 'un-African' (Cock, 2003; Graziano, 2004a). On the contrary, the statement of homosexuality being 'un-African' is refuted by Graziano (2004a), Reddy, Sandfort and Rispel (2009), and Tucker (2009) who cite various literature that documents historical evidence of African men (in Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa) having sex with men and/or taking on male lovers that dates back to the 19th Century.

It is crucial to acknowledge that there are positive developments in South African black communities. Reid (2003) argues that black gay men are visible and accepted in their communities, contrary to prevalent beliefs. However, this acceptance is limited to the gay men adhering to cultural gender scripts that prescribes that they behave effeminate (Reid, 2003). Within black communities there are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and Asexual (LGBTIQA) organisations that advocate for greater visibility, acceptance and enforcement of gay people's rights. They also offer a sense of support for gay people within these black communities (Reid, 2003).

When these young black gay students enter the university environment, some encounter a sense of community and freedom of expression, an opportunity to interact with others like themselves, as well as have available access to resources which positively shape their

psychosexual development (Arndt & de Bruin, 2006; Graziano, 2004b). However, this space can also offer major conflicting roles, identities and groups which one should navigate. This includes amongst others 'top' and 'bottom' constructions of sexuality, feminine and masculine presenting homosexuals, as well as friends who are open and those in the closet (Kiguwa, 2015). This presents a gap in research which considers the various narratives that black gay university students narrate in maintaining identity constructions of gender and sexual orientation.

Given the racial, cultural and socio-economic implications discussed above, more research remains essential to understand the experiences of young gay black students in South African universities and their decision to conceal or disclose their sexual orientation within the social context in which they are situated. This context is to be interrogated not only by observing the university environment but also the personal and interpersonal histories that university students relay into their new environment (Kiguwa, 2015; Moolman, 2013).

Research Aims

The aim of this study was to enquire on the narratives of black gay South African university students who are discreet about their sexual orientation. These narratives focused on their social experiences which involve the interactions that they have with other people while at university. Furthermore, this study aimed to enquire on narratives around how these black gay men experience and practice their sexuality.

Research questions

1. What social experience narratives do black gay university students who are in the closet narrate?
2. What sexual narratives do they narrate?

Rationale

There have been reports of negative experiences of gay students in various South African universities. These include: rejection, stigmatisation, physical assaults, harassment and victimisation from staff and students (Graziano, 2004b; Hames, 2004; Msibi, 2011; Mavhandu-

Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015). Research on gender and same-sex sexuality in South African institutions of higher education is only recently emerging as previously research revolved around basic education institutions (Matebeni & Msibi,2015). In terms of sexual practices, there is inadequate research that provides information about the sexual experiences of homosexual men in South Africa (Nel, 2009). Little is known about their knowledge, skills and motivations to protect themselves and their sexual partners from Human Immunodeficiency Virus(HIV) acquisition (Reddy et al., 2009).

On the other hand, much research merely reports on the negative experiences of university students being victims and survivors of homophobia (Taulke-Johnson, 2008). This gives a fractional understanding of their experiences and pathologises their sexuality (Taulke-Johnson, 2008). South African gay literature seems to cater for white readers while portraying black gay people negatively (Graziano, 2004a). Although there are intersectional challenges black university students face; some do have positive narratives of resilience and optimism that research needs to report on (Graziano, 2004a). This presents a welcomed change from much of the literature which mainly focuses on socio-cultural challenges.

A negative image of gay people's sexuality as being associated with violence, suffering, vulnerability and risk of viruses has been created by much research in South Africa with the neglect of other topics of study (Erlank, 2013; Reddy, 2004; Matebeni & Msibi, 2015). Although it is crucial for research to highlight the challenges that gay people endure, such as rape and HIV vulnerability; "often narratives of pleasure and desire disappear" in South African research on gay sexuality (Matebeni & Msibi, 2015, p.4). Black sexuality research should include narratives that do not isolate the "serious discussions on the politics and erotics of sexual pleasure" (Kiguwa, 2015, p.119).

It is evident that research that enquires on broad narratives of social and sexual experiences of black gay university students are important in developing an understanding of gay people that is not tilted towards a specific negative or positive focus. Therefore, new theoretical understandings of the experiences of gay people can be formed based on my research. My research may also highlight awareness that there are gay people who are incorporated within the assumed heterosexual spaces that university students may take for granted. Furthermore, attention can be drawn towards progress or a lack of progress in university policies to protect sexual minority students. Finally, this research can encourage

university students to advocate for a more accommodating university space where gay students need not hide their sexual orientation.

Conclusion

The introductory chapter presented a brief background of the social and sexual experiences of black gay university students within the South African context. This chapter also identified the study aims and research questions. A rationale underpinning the significance of the study was also presented as guided by literature as well as the identification of gaps in knowledge.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter will begin by defining and conceptualising key terms that relate to the literature of the research topic. The next section will go on to discussing literature on the university social experiences of gay students and then discuss the sexual practices and experiences of gay men. The last section of this chapter introduces the theoretical framework used in the study.

Conceptualisation of key terms

'Narrated experiences'.

This research is grounded on a Narrative theoretical framework, it is therefore important to conceptualise the word 'experience' in Narrative research. A narrative experience can be defined as a construction by a narrator through the use of stories (Atkinson & Delmont, 2006). Atkinson and Delmont (2006) explain the narrative experiences as being informed by socially shared cultural conventions; "even the most superficially 'private' experiences are enacted in accordance with culturally prescribed genres and formats of expression" (p.169). Silverman (2013) explains this: "'Experiences' need to be reconceptualised as part of an activity. Telling someone about our experiences is not just emptying out the contents of our head but also organising a tale told to a proper recipient by an authorised teller." (p.115). It therefore is evident that in interpreting the experiences of black gay university students, a comprehensive depiction of the intersectional cultural, racial and social contexts which inform their narratives is important.

Black.

The definition of what constitutes being 'black' about a racial group is diverse. This study aligns itself with the definitions that recognise that race is a socio-political construction. These socio-political constructions of race have been found to have social and psychological implications on black students' experiences in university settings (Freeman, 1998; Renn, 2012). The definition of black is even more complicated in South Africa due the existing

oppressions and privileges created by the Apartheid regime (Graziano,2004a). Coetzee and Roux (1998) define blacks as "those who are, by law or tradition, politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realization of their aspirations" (p.360). With this definition, Coetzee and Roux (1998) assert that in South Africa being black is not based on skin colour but rather as "a reflection of a mental attitude" (p.360).

Freeman (1998) explored African American university students' experiences of their culture in university settings. Freeman (1998) argues that the black cultural context is neglected in research practice and should be integrated in policy-making. From the personal and institutional narratives collected in the book, Freeman (1998) concludes that the conceptualisation of a black racial identity should be formulated in a way that recognises the "situational nature of black identity for students, and the relationship between students' perception of the black community on campus and their self-evaluation of their black identity" (p.114).

Although race is an important characteristic to consider in South African research, Arndt and de Bruin's (2006) quantitative study found race not having a statistically significant effect on the attitudes of gay people amongst different race groups. In an attempt to explain this finding, Arndt and de Bruin (2006) cite Waldo (1998) and argue that this may be due to black students' minority status in the university which makes them appreciate discrimination based on racial discrimination that they themselves experience. However, a study of racial demographics in a Gauteng university used in Arndt and de Bruin (2006) may have changed over the years and Waldo's (1998) explanation may be inapplicable. Additional research that looks at race is warranted in looking at attitudes of different race groups of gay people.

Homosexuality and gay.

Homosexuality can be defined as "the manifestation of sexual desire towards a member of one's own sex or the erotic activity with a member of the same sex" (Ekwo, 2010, p. 3). The word 'gay' and 'homosexuality' are contested to be different by Msibi (2011) who highlights the historical, political and social differences between the two. Due to the term 'homosexuality' originally being used as a mental diagnosis, preference is given to the term 'gay' (American Psychological Association, 2008). Regardless of Msibi's (2011) arguments the two terms still involve sexual desire towards the same sex as defined by Ekwo (2010). Although I use the term 'gay', I argue it to be synonymous with the term 'homosexual'.

Coming out of the closet.

The term 'coming out of the closet' is regarded as a stage in a gay individual's sexual identity development where the individual is comfortable in disclosing his sexual orientation to other people (Cass, 1984). Herdt and Boxer (1993) see coming out as an ongoing process where a gay individual rejects negative societal attitudes towards his sexual orientation, learns about gay culture and then associates with members of the gay community. Furthermore, the individual decides on a continuous basis whether or not to disclose his sexual orientation to people with whom he interacts (Herdt & Boxer, 1993).

The society and culture in which an individual is situated and its views on homosexuality inform his decision of coming out or not (APA, 2008; Green, 2000). Although there are positive developments in the attitudes of homosexuality in South Africa, the country's cultures remain intolerant of homosexuality (de Vos, 2009; Graziano, 2004b; Hames, 2007). Due to the risk of being rejected and stigmatised by families and communities, many South African gay men remain 'in the closet' or 'closeted' (Graziano; Nel & Judge, 2008). What it means to be in the closet is debatable; this study will interpret being in the closet as: actively hiding one's sexual orientation but disclosing it to a few trusted others.

Sexual orientation.

Definitions relating to the overlapping terms of sexuality and sexual orientation are contentions and arguably indefinable (American Psychological Association & National Association of School Psychologists (APA & NASP), 2015; Diamant & McAnulty, 1995; Reddy et al., 2009; Schwarz & Rutter, 2000). There are debates on the point of focus either being on sexual behaviour, erotic or emotional attractions, cognition or self-labelling (APA & NASP, 2015; Diamant, 1995; Msibi, 2011). There are contentions that arise from the self-labelling of sexuality and sexual orientation that brought forth general terms such as 'men who have sex with men' in health academic research (Kim, 2000; Reid, 2006; Msibi, 2011). Sexuality and sexual orientation can occur as a continuum between sexes. They are fluid and can change from time to time (APA & NASP, 2015).

Sexual orientation is not to be defined as an individual characteristic because it manifests through relationships and behaviours with other people (APA,2008). Accordingly, the APA (2008) states that "sexual orientation defines the group of people in which one is likely to find the satisfying and fulfilling romantic relationships that are an essential component of personal identity for many people" (p.1). Sexual orientation is often characterised as

homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, asexual and others (APA & NASP, 2015). Sexuality is defined by Schwartz & Rutter (2000) as an integration between an individual's sexual behaviour and sexual attractions and desire towards a certain gender.

It is evident that the definitions of sexual orientation and sexuality are indeed indefinable. In this report I use the term sexual orientation and sexuality interchangeably as an integration of an individual's attractions (emotional or erotic), their self-labelling and sexual interactions with people of a certain sex or gender.

Gender.

According to Butler (1990), gender is a performance that is accomplished through "a set of repeated acts that within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal overtime to produce the appearance of substance of a natural sort of being" (p.45). West and Fenstermaker (1993) state that gender is not to be defined by biological characteristics but instead be defined as an accomplishment that is performed through social interactions. Defining gender based on biological markers prevents recognition of the power dynamics within the different historical, cultural and social contexts that exist amongst different genders, such as patriarchy (Butler, 1990; West & Fenstermaker, 1993). Furthermore, this approach leads to the erroneous belief that gender is divided naturally as men and women; which promotes heterosexuality while subverting homosexuality (Butler, 1990).

Hegemonic masculinity and femmephobia.

There are different types of masculinities determined by social hierarchy and power. Hegemonic masculinity is the highest form of masculinity in the social hierarchy. Hegemonic masculinity can be characterised, based on R W Connell as "a gender practice that in a given space and time supports gender inequality" (Pascoe, 2013, p.7). Due to hegemonic masculinity being at the top of the hierarchy, few men can accomplish this form of masculinity (Pascoe, 2013). One type of masculinity is labelled 'subordinated masculinity' and describes men who are oppressed by definitions of hegemonic masculinity such as dominance, power and status (Pascoe, 2013). Subordinated masculinity is used to degrade homosexual men who possess effeminate characteristics (Pascoe, 2013).

Sánchez, Blas-Lopez, Martínez-Patiño and Vilain (2016) found that although gay men in the United States of America (USA) were aware of the different types of masculinities, they nonetheless valued traditional forms of masculinity which prescribed that they seek power and reject feminine behaviour in themselves and other men. In South Africa, many men perpetuate

dominant forms of masculinity which empowers heterosexuality and anti-femininity (Morrel, 2001). Nonetheless there is a gradual shift in rejecting this kind of masculinity and adopting more contemporary forms of masculinity (Morrel, 2001). Gay people in South Africa develop their sexuality in societies where hegemonic masculinity prevails and thus their sexuality rejected (Morrel, 2001).

Femiphobia can be linked to hegemonic masculinity due to men feeling disturbed by gay men showing effeminate behaviour and thus deviating from pursuing hegemonic masculinity (Pascoe, 2013; Taywaditep, 2002). Femiphobia is characterised by negative attitudes or feeling towards feminine behaviour in gay men (Miller & Behmn-Morawitz, 2016). Femiphobia is often used synonymously with the terms 'femmephobia', 'effemiphobia' and "anti-femininity' which are characterised by negative feelings and behaviours towards femininity in anyone who displays feminine behaviour in prescribed by societal definitions of masculinity and femininity (Miller & Behmn-Morawitz, 2016). However, Miller and Behmn-Morawitz (2016) report that femmephobia is mostly used in academic writing because it is more comprehensive as it has been found to discriminate against both lesbian women and gay men. It is for this reason that I use the term femmephobia in this report.

Femmephobia has been found to influence gay men's sexual experiences and practices (Kuperberg & Padgett, 2015; Miller & Behmn-Morawitz, 2016; Taywaditep, 2002). Gay university students meet sexual partners through internet sources such as dating applications and websites (Kuperberg & Padgett, 2015). These online platforms are filled with hegemonic masculinity and femmephobic language that is used to exclude and stigmatise gay men who are viewed as feminine (Miller & Behmn-Morawitz, 2016). Gay men who perceive themselves as masculine seek only masculine gay sexual partners and use femmephobic language to express their lack of desire towards effeminate man (Kuperberg & Padgett, 2015; Miller & Behmn-Mor, 2016)

The use of femmephobic language has been found to be gay men's pursuit to enhance their attractiveness to masculine users on the internet platforms (Taywaditep, 2002). The use of femmephobic language was seen as by some gay men in Miller and Behn-Morawitz's (2016) quantitative study in the USA as ineffective in gay men's pursuit to appear attractive or be perceived as masculine. Miller and Behn-Morawitz (2016) found that some gay men were less likely to meet online users who used femmephobic language to form friendships with them but they were still likely to meet them to have sexual intercourse. However, most gay men found

online users who used femmephobic language as less sexually confident, overcompensating for their own femininity and therefore undesirable. This shows that although gay men may use femmephobic language to be perceived as more masculine and attractive; they are not always perceived that way by other people (Miller & Behmn-Morawitz, 2016).

Some gay men may often display femmephobic behaviour as a defence mechanism against the childhood ridicule that they experienced for displaying feminine behaviour themselves (Taywaditep, 2002). Some gay men have been found to be overly conscious of presenting themselves as masculine (Taywaditep, 2002). This preoccupation can become part of their self-concept and thus leading them to continuously be conscious of presenting themselves in a masculine manner in accordance to societal scripts of masculinity (Taywaditep, 2002). Sánchez et al. (2016) report that gay men who are preoccupied with upholding traditional forms of masculinity show internalised homophobia and hold femmephobic attitudes. Taywaditep (2002) explains that although masculine men who have rejected effeminate behaviours in themselves due to childhood stigmatisation are able avoid femmephobia and hide their sexuality; "their ongoing preoccupation with "fitting in" may unfortunately come with a price, as they have associated their own and other gay men's gender nonconformity with discomfort and disapproval" (p.18).

Heteronormativity.

Heteronormativity is the ideology that normal sexuality is defined by complimentary heterosexual categories on gender (i.e. men and women) leading to alternative forms of sexualities to be marginalised (Weinzimmer & Twill, 2015). Ward and Schneider (2009) conceptualised heteronormativity as reliant on sexual minorities, "[h]eterosexual bodies, subjects, norms, and practices are always articulated and naturalized *in relation* to nonnormative genders and sexualities…" (emphasis in original) (p.434).

Literature review

University social experiences of gay students.

Black gay university students in South Africa live in spaces where language has a momentous impact on the experiences of gay people (Matebeni & Msibi, 2015). Language is used to

exclude, degrade and objectify gay people based on discourse that views their sexuality as deviant from heterosexual norms (Matebeni & Msibi, 2015). Researching black South African gay men's sexual practices is often challenging because they may not associate themselves with the label 'gay' as this label is often rejected in their communities (Reid, 2006; Visser, 2013). Reid (2013) explains that in some South African black communities there are men who do not identify with labels such as homosexual, gay or bisexual and yet have intimate relationships with effeminate men. This is because there are men within these societies who utilise derogatory labels to describe homosexuals in South Africa to exclude and degrade gay people (Matebeni & Msibi, 2015; Reid, 2003). Verbal abuse is rarely reported to the authorities; this abuse may contribute to self-esteem challenges that gay people may experience (Nel & Judge, 2008).

Many South African gay people begin to acknowledge their sexual orientation during their time at university where they interact with other gay people, discreetly or openly (Arndt & de Bruin, 2006). Their perception of the university environment as being either supporting or rejecting of their acknowledged sexual identity influences gay students' decision to conceal or disclose their sexual orientation (Arndt & de Bruin, 2006). However, many South African universities have created a space where heteronormativity is celebrated and gay students are marginalised because of their sexual orientation (Jagessar & Msibi, 2015; Rothman & Simmonds, 2015). This leaves some gay students to isolate themselves and hide their sexual orientation (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009; Graziano, 2004b; Sumeru, 2012). Gay people who hide their sexual orientation (being 'in the closet') may develop psychological harm and attempt to cope with this through the use of alcohol, drugs and engaging in unsafe sexual practices (Kruger, Maritz, Matroos & Wells, 2006; Nel, 2009).

Gay university students have legal protection from discrimination through the South African constitution which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation (de Vos,2009; Hames, 2007). However socially, there are still reports of gay students enduring rejection, discrimination, stigmatisation and harassment for their sexual orientation (Graziano, 2004b; Hames, 2007). Moreover, in South Africa, religion serves as a powerful voice that advocates against the equal rights of gay people (Afshar, 2006). Religion has been a basis to discriminate and harass some university students in South Africa at predominately 'black' universities (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015).

Graziano (2004b) explains that being in the closet for gay students comes with the maintenance of two separate images. There is the public image where gay students attempt to conform with gender norms to appear heterosexual. There is also a private image which the gay student exhibits only in the presence of other gay students (Graziano, 2004b). Graziano (2004b) states that students who self-identify as gay may accept this sexual orientation and in time disclose it to others. In contrast, same-sex sexual practices may involve physical aspects of sexual behaviour without identifying as gay men or 'men who have sex with men' (Graziano, 2004b).

The qualitative study by Graziano (2004) that looked at the adaptations of coming out as gay or lesbian at Stellenbosch University, Western Cape in the year 2000, found that participants who were part of a gay student group organisation found a sense of support and acquaintanceship with other gay students. They also showed positive self-images and high self-esteems. In the gay student groups, they were free to express themselves openly without needing to censor any behaviour that may be criticised as 'gay'. In these student groups, they found a way to express themselves, their thoughts and feelings. However, some of them were concerned about being viewed as gay and therefore hid their association to these organisations and their gay acquaintances when in public. They would not participate in events and campaigns held in public. This was because gay students were discriminated and victimised by their heterosexual peers.

Hames' (2007) case study about the University of the Western Cape highlights similar issues with gay students seeking acceptance by 'acting straight' to pass as heterosexual. These gay students hide their sexual orientation by attempting to express hegemonic masculinity. Gay students who were part of gay student groups, like those in Graziano's (2004b) study, did not want to take part in public events and workshops that will make their association visible and have their heterosexual image challenged.

Victimisations of gay students on and around campus influenced the gay students' willingness to come out or stay in the closet (Graziano, 2004b). These victimisations involved verbal assaults, graffiti on residence doors, threats of murder and physical violence (Graziano, 2004). Staying in the student residential dormitories saw first year gay students from the Stellenbosch University having an orientation gathering that required the singing and chanting of homophobic slurs. They would participate in these in order not to be viewed as outsiders

(Graziano, 2004). Graziano (2004) states that the university's administration would dismiss complaints as student tradition.

Msibi (2011) reports similar hostility of gay students in student residential dormitories at the University of Zululand, Kwa-Zulu Natal, where gay students were violently attacked, ridiculed and forced out of the residences by heterosexual students. These gay students also had to hide their sexual orientation and conform to gender norms so as to appear heterosexual.

Graziano (2004b) reports that Stellenbosch University's homophobic campus environment kept gay students in the closet; having to hide their sexual orientation. This left the students not free to express themselves, feeling isolated, confused and distressed (Graziano, 2004b). Graziano (2004b) found that a common method that university students would use to deal with difficult feelings of psychological distress and depression was to visit the university counselling centre. However, the participants in Graziano's (2004b) study reported feeling hopeless in their counselling sessions because the counsellors were not trained to deal with gay-related issues.

In an unnamed rural university in Limpopo, Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Sandy (2015) report how gay students experienced stigmatisation and discrimination over their sexual identity on religious grounds. The participants in the study reported that other gay students experienced stigmatisation and victimisation frequently by the university staff and students. "They are labelled as 'sinners' 'satanic' or 'demon-possessed'" (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015, p.4). Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Sandy (2015) state that the university administrative staff and healthcare workers perpetuate this discrimination by denying services to gay students. They view supporting gay students as promoting sin and that "would anger God and be a bad omen for the university" (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015, p.4).

There were interventions supported by heterosexist lecturers and students that sought to transform the gay students to being heterosexual (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015). The participants explained that there are "spiritual and physical interventions such as offering prayers and sprinkling potions and solutions to drive away the evil spirits that caused them to become non-heterosexual" (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015, p.4). There are students who have dropped out of the university and some being suicidal as a result of the anxiety they experienced due to the labelling and discrimination (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015).

A defence mechanism utilised by Hames' (2004) and Msibi's (2011) participants was to actively conceal their sexuality and act as heterosexuals. This was similar to other studies

with university student participants by Graziano (2004b) and Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy (2015). Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy (2015) state that this dual type of sexual expression put the gay students at a higher risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV and other sexually transmitted infection due to having multiple sex partners from both sexes.

Discrimination in South African universities is also perpetuated by tutors and lecturers when discussing topics that involve LGBTIQA+ topics with students (Rothmann & Simmonds, 2015). Participants in Graziano's (2004b) study stated that there would be in-class discussions about gay and lesbian issues during lectures. However overall, they did not feel welcomed by the university staff and fellow students. According to Richardson (2004) there are programmes and workshops that include LGBTIQA+ topics that are excluded in many universities because universities are not compelled to offer these. Hames (2004) found that discussions that involve issues of sexuality and sexual orientation where present in humanities courses however, "they comprise to a large extent the theoretically objectification, pathologising and exotification of the 'other'" (p.67). Rothmann and Simmonds (2015) note that a balanced portrayal of the lived experiences of LGBTIQA+ people should be incorporated in university programmes. Furthermore, the intersectional factors, such as politics, race and culture, that influence the lives of gay people should be highlighted in university curriculums (Rothmann & Simmonds, 2015).

These negative experiences of homophobia and heterosexism mirror those reported by Msibi (2012) in a Kwa-Zulu Natal high school, but also of a lot of international research of gay high school students' experiences. Relatedly, Douglas, Warwick, Kemp and Whitty (1997) and Savin-Williams (1994) found that gay students who are open about their sexual orientation experienced stigmatisation, bullying and threats of violent attacks. Homophobic bullying of gay students often results in mental health changes such as anxiety and depression (Hershberger, Pilkington & D'Augelli, 1997; Pilkington & D'Augelli, 1995), avoiding going to school, achieving low grades and dropping out (Saltzburg, 2007; Thurlow, 2001).

Taulke-Johnson (2008) contests for positive accounts from reports of gay students' experiences of university. Taulke-Johnson (2008, p.123) states that:

> "The constant (re)telling and reiterating of those stories which catalogue pain and misery and solely portray gay students as victims and survivors of anti-gay sentiment, provided only a particularly, pathologised and partial understanding of insight into their living experiences at university".

In Taulke-Johnson's (2008) qualitative study in the United Kingdom, the participants perceived the university as a place where they could explore their sexual orientation and develop a sense of self and identity as gay men. Some gay students choose universities that are far from their homes to be free to experience life as gay men and associate with other gay students. At home, they would need to hide their sexual orientation from their parents (Taulke-Johnson, 2008).

Taulke-Johnson (2008) admits that gay students experience issues of homophobia and heteronormativity; however, he asserts that some gay students are able to negotiate their identities and experience university life positively. Taulke-Johnson (2008, p.126) states:

> Despite my participants' adhering to, rather than contesting the boundaries imposed by heterosexist discourse at university; they were nevertheless able to engage successfully and fruitfully with their sexuality in this environment through skill, sensitivity and careful negotiation of their homosexual behaviour and performance within these parameters.

Taulke-Johnson (2008) explains that the participants were strategically able to come out to their flatmates, peers and friends by predicting their responses to the disclosure. Some welcomed and supported them. Taulke-Johnson (2008) reinforces that "not all gay students face rejection and victimisation so not all non-gay harbour anti-gay sentiments" (p.127). Taulke-Johnson (2008) concedes however that the level of acceptance of the participants coming out as gay was dependant on how much of the heteronormativity they disturbed. This means that the other students would be more accepting of the disclosure if the gay student still behaved in a masculine way and appeared heterosexual.

Even though they had been fully aware and cautious of the norms, expectations and assumptions of the compulsory heterosexuality operating there, the participants relate that they have nonetheless been happy, had fun and felt that they had been able to address their self-identity as gay men in this environment, describing it as an 'incredibly accepting place', 'so open' and 'a place to be yourself' (Taulke-Johnson, 2008, p.130).

Sexual practices and experiences of gay men.

In South Africa, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) have been dominating topics on research that relates to sexual experiences

and practices of men who have sex with men (Matebeni & Msibi, 2015). However, there is research that has looked at other factors of the sexual experiences of gay men that do not relate directly to HIV and AIDS (Matebeni & Msibi, 2015; Kiguwa, 2015). These other factors include experiences of sexual pleasure, power dynamics within sexual relationships and sexual identity amongst South African black gay men (Collier et al., 2015; Gil, 2007; Kiguwa, 2015).

Gil (2007) defines pleasure in gay sexual intercourse as dietetical interaction. Gil (2007) explains that "during the intercourse itself, it is the verbal and non-verbal dialogue between two [or more] partners, each with his own intra-dialogue which defines their satisfaction" (p.73). This illustrates that above physical pleasure, language and social interaction are mechanisms that give subjective personal and interpersonal meaning to gay men's sexual experiences (Gil, 2007). Linguistic and social influences on gay men's sexual experiences is evidenced in the labels that are used by gay men to identify themselves based on their sexual and social experiences. The labels 'top', 'bottom' and 'versatile' are usually used in describing the sexual practices of gay men as well as their behaviour and identification (Gil, 2007). The social influence of heteronormative scripts has been found to play a role in gay men's sexual practices and experiences (Kiguwa, 2015).

The top partner is categorised as the insertive partner in anal sexual intercourse and is characterised as having traits that are stereotyped as masculine such as aggression and dominance (Kiguwa, 2015). Gil's (2007) narrative study based in Israel, found masculinity to be a prominent aspect in gay men's identification as top. The act and label of being top can be used as compensation from the loss of masculinity that some gay men feel, due social hostility towards effeminate young boys (Gil, 2007). Gil (2007) found that not all top identifying gay men get pleasure from penetrating. However, they feel that being bottom will be humiliating for them because they will lose a sense of masculinity. Some top partners derive sexual pleasure by displaying power by inflicting pain on receptive partners (Gil, 2007).

The bottom partner is categorised as the receptive partner in anal sexual intercourse and is characterised with traits that are stereotyped as feminine such as passivity and submission (Kiguwa, 2015). Gil (2007) found that besides feeling pleasure physically, the act of bottoming gave some gay men pleasure from the sense of freedom to connect to a feminine side they are socially restricted from expressing in hostile public spaces. This kind of hostility is experienced by gay people in South African public spaces (Kiguwa, 2015; Nel & Judge, 2008). Narratives informed by heterosexist scripts saw participants in Gil's (2007) study experiencing acts of

being penetrated in a humiliating manner, and yet found it appealing and pleasurable by partners who identified as bottom.

Versatile partners are more adaptable in that they either do not have anal sexual intercourse or they are both receptive or insertive partners if they do engage in anal sexual intercourse (Gil,2007). Although versatile gay men play both top and bottom roles, some are hesitant to label themselves or their sexual practices (Gil, 2007). Furthermore, since versatile gay men are both top and bottom, they challenge heteronormative scripts of categorising sexual roles into behaviours of femininity or masculinity (Gil, 2007). Gil (2007) found versatile gay men to be more adaptable, nonconforming and show better adjustment to their sexuality.

Amongst black gay South African men "enjoyment of rights to sexual and gender expression intersects with other socio-historical and cultural privileges both in terms of access to basic sexual and reproductive resources as well as protection against bodily integrity" (Kiguwa, 2015, p.119). This highlights the importance of recognising that narrated sexual experiences of South African black gay university students are not solely narrated from a personal point of view. Instead, there are intersectional social scripts that inform their experiences. In South Africa, these social scripts occur across race, culture and economic status (Graziano, 2004a; Nel & Judge, 2008).

The labels top or bottom inform the scripts which give meaning not only to gay men's sexual experiences but also their social interactions (Kiguwa, 2015; Gill, 2015). Kiguwa's (2015) qualitative study based in Johannesburg, found that being bottom is a performance of an identity that is conveyed differently within different spaces. There are different power dynamics that are in play between top and bottom identifying gay men (Kiguwa, 2015). Power is either shared towards mutual pleasure or dominating and geared towards one partner. The assumption is that identifying as bottom is equated with a reduction of power following patriarchal scripts which view femininity in men as a weakness (Kiguwa, 2015).

Kiguwa (2015) found that bottom identifying participants reject this notion and affirm that the pleasure that they give to top partners gives them control and power. This link between pleasure and power has also been found in Gil's (2007) study on bottom-identifying participants who expressed a sense of pleasure and power from feeling in control of the pleasure they give to a top-identifying partner. Additionally, some top-identifying men derive pleasure from the impression that they give pleasure to receptive partners (Gil,2007). It is still to be

investigated in South Africa whether this transcends to a social role of providing the safety towards bottom identifying partners in black communities like Kiguwa's (2015) findings.

South African black communities are intolerant of homosexuality; this leaves many homosexuals at the risk of physical attacks based on their sexuality (Mkhize et al., 2010). In South Africa, a bottom identity plays out in the safety of gay men, more especially in townships (Kiguwa, 2015). Kiguwa (2015) found that black bottom identifying gay men formed relationships with top identifying partners (who are masculine) to feel safe when in hostile spaces outside the university such as taxi ranks and township communities. Gil (2007) found that the act of bottoming is viewed as a loss of power, although the participants did not acknowledge this as a reduction of power; it appears that bottom identifying partners do relinquish their power or agency in exchange for safety (Gil, 2007; Kiguwa, 2015).

Besides securing safety, receptive partners need to negotiate how pleasure is maintained and pain is managed (Kiguwa, 2015; Collier et al., 2015). In South African townships, anal sexual intercourse has been found to be associated with displeasure and pain by black gay sexual partners (Collier et al., 2015). Collier et al.'s (2015) qualitative study based in South African townships around Gauteng, found that participants who are receptive partners during anal sexual intercourse report painful sexual experiences. Although condoms are freely accessible in public places within townships, lubricants are generally not free and are sold at shops or pharmacies outside the township (Collier et al., 2015). This has an influence on the pain/pleasure factor that receptive partners experience because lubrication makes penetration easier (Collier et al., 2015).

Some bottom partners have been found to consume alcohol to manage the pain they experience during anal sexual intercourse (Collier et al., 2015). Alcohol use has been associated with risky sexual behaviour (Lane, Shade, Mcintre & Mann, 2008). Whilst drunk, gay men often act carelessly and engage in risky sexual activities such as unprotected sex (Collier et al., 2015). The use of alcohol is a cultural norm in many South African communities. Areas where alcohol is consumed is often where gay men meet other men with whom they have sex (Collier et al., 2015).

Alcohol consumption has also been found to lead to some receptive partners experiencing pain during anal sexual intercourse (Collier et al., 2015); after alcohol consumption, some insertive partners refuse to accommodate receptive partners in managing pain and may engage in rough sex. This gives the insertive partner more control over the sexual

activity (Collier et al., 2015). Receptive partners respond to painful anal sex by setting boundaries with insertive partners (Collier et al., 2015). Some bottom participants in Collier et al.'s (2015) study were found to abstain from having anal sexual intercourse, having non-penetrative sexual acts and setting rules regarding sexual positions that they are comfortable with.

On a positive note, although healthcare providers in South African townships often hinder gay men from acquiring health and safety knowledge on same-sex sexual practices; participants in Collier et al.'s (2015) study showed an awareness of safe same-sex sexual practices. Collier et al. (2015) found that participants understood the importance of lubrication and the use of water-based lubricants which are best for condoms not breaking. This information may be as a result of LGBTIQA+ groups in townships that seek to educate gay men about safe sexual intercourse (Collier et al., 2015). This understanding is beneficial in lowering the risk of sexually transmitted infections amongst gay men.

Although popularly researched, discussing the role of gay men's sexual practices in relation to HIV acquisition risk is important. There is a high prevalence of HIV acquisition amongst gay men (Lane et al., 2009; Rosario et al., 2006). Mental health challenges such as substance abuse disorder and depression have lead some gay men struggling with coming out and to engage in sexual risky behaviour (Rosario et al., 2006; Savin-Williams, 1994). The challenges that these gay men endure are as a result of the pressure of hiding their sexual orientation and coming out to family and friends (Rosario et al., 2006).

Eaton, Flisher and Aar (2003) state that personal factors, interpersonal relationships and the society and culture that one is situated in affects the HIV risk behaviour of youth in South Africa. Some gay men practice anal sexual intercourse which carries with it a high risk of HIV infection, even more so if it is unprotected (Brody & Potterat, 2003; Lane et al., 2009) and is highly frequent and/or with multiple partners (Wade et al.,2005).

Lane et al. (2009) found that men who have sex with men in Soweto, South Africa are at a high risk for HIV infection. Some men who have sex with men also have sex with women; this puts these women at risk of HIV infection as well. Insertive anal sexual partners are at a lower risk of HIV infection than receptive anal sex partners (Koblin et al., 2003). Furthermore, being open about one's sexual orientation and being part of a LGBTIQA+ community may inspire testing for HIV due to openness about same-sex sexual practices; making those who are discreet about their sexual practices less likely to get tested (Sandfort et al., 2008).

Thus, far the literature shows various challenges that black gay university students endure from within their home communities, the university and the country at large. This study will contribute towards to knowledge around the sexual and social experiences of black gay university students within the South African social and cultural context in which they are situated

Theoretical framework

My research uses a theoretical framework that is based on Narrative Theory in Psychology (Crossley,2000) which informs the research methodology and data analysis. In South Africa, "there is a need to develop renewed theoretical and methodological lenses with which to explore same-sex sexuality" (Matebeni & Msibi, 2015, p.7). The use of Narrative Theory has been found to be invaluable in understanding the subjective meanings in which gay men attach to their experiences and their sexual practices (Gil, 2007). Narrative Theory allows for black gay students' narratives to be viewed as subjective, individualistic but also embedded in language and socio-cultural contexts (Crossley, 2000). Research that emphasises the subjective meanings of gay men's sexual orientation is minimal (Gil, 2007). The above discussion justifies the use Narrative Theory in my study

Narrative Psychology is described by Crossley (2009) as an approach that "appreciates the linguistic and discursive structuring of 'self' and 'experiences' but also maintains a sense of essentially personal, coherent and 'real' nature of individual subjectivity" (p.132). Narrative psychology is concerned with subjectivity, experience and fully comprehending the person's thoughts or feelings about events in his/her life (Crossley, 2007). It therefore works on the premise that there is a 'chain of connection' between what a person narrates and their thoughts, feelings and reflections about the world, themselves and others (Crossley, 2007).

Narrative theory views human beings as social actors who through linguistic and cultural scripts continuously make meaning of their selves and their interactions with other people(Crossley,2000). Although narrative theory appreciates the significant role of language and social structures, the social actor still maintains agency and reflexivity in his narration of his self and his interpretations of his experiences, limited within the linguistic and cultural resources at his disposal (Crossley, 2000).

What are narratives?

There are various ways of which researchers from different disciplines define the terms "narratives" or/and "stories" and how they differentiate and use the two terms (Riessman, 2002). Riessman (2008) states that in psychology and sociology "personal narratives encompass long sections of talk- extended accounts of lives in context that develops over the course of single or multiple research interviews or therapeutic conversations" (p.6). Murray (2008) defines narratives in psychology as "an organised interpretation of a sequence of events" (p.113). However, Riessman (2008) cautions that there is no clear and simple definition between the two terms and in contemporary writing, "story" and "narrative" are used synonymously. As such, in this report I will use the terms synonymously and interchangeably. Guided by the different definitions provided by Riessman (2002), I view a personal narrative as the narrator's entire life story that consists of smaller stories that are brief and sequentially organised "around characters, setting and plot" (p.697). Stories are responses to specific questions and they "recapitulate specific events the narrator witnessed or experienced" (Riessman, 2002, p.697).

A central feature of narratives is that they are temporal and located spatially; they are constructed past experiences located in a certain time and place (Riessman, 2008). Narratives are constructed from events or experiences. The construction takes place when events that are "perceived by the [narrator] as important are selected, organised, connected and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience" (Riessman, 2008, p.3). The classic structure of a story has a sequence; a beginning, middle and an end (Riessman, 2008). However, since we live in a storied world, narrators may omit an ending and expect the audience to understand the narrative (Murray, 2008). Living in a storied world means that there are social narratives already established that narrators may perceive audiences to be familiar with (Murray, 2008). Chase (2005) further adds that "in addition to describing what happened, narratives also express emotions, thoughts, and interpretations…" (p.656) from the narrator's point of view, who constructs a sense of self.

Atkinson and Delamont (2006) explain that narratives are a social phenomenon that is embedded in social interaction and that it is an enactment of social life. Narratives are fluid and subject to change in time and context (Murray, 2008). When a narrator tells a story, he or she already knows the ending and begins constructing accounts from there. Narrative may change as new information becomes available through a reconceptualization that may be informed by the process of narrating (Murray, 2008). Narratives change and are constructed

differently depending on the social and cultural context in which the narrator and audience are situated as well as their relationship (Murray, 2008).

The role of narratives in social interaction

According to Murray (2008), narratives are important in bringing order in a disordered world. The narrator attempts to give meaning by organising disorganised events and experiences. As individuals experience disorder within their social interactions, such as separation, illness or death or a loved, they attempt to restore order by using narratives. Narratives are therefore a means of creating order and meaning in an ever-changing world (Murray, 2008). Narratives are a way of individuals to see the world and a way in which they actively construct the world (Murray, 2008).

Furthermore, narratives function to allow individuals to construct their identities and distinguish themselves from others. The stories that narrators narrate are further informed by stories told by others, thus creating a link between different individuals (Murray, 2008). While individuals construct their own identities through narrating their experiences, communities and groups also construct their preferred narratives about themselves (Riessman, 2008). Narratives within a certain culture can be used to bring people together and form social movements through storytelling that is constructed by cultural conventions (Riessman, 2008; Squire, 2005). Narratives are interactional; they need a narrator and an audience willing to listen and engage(Riessman,2002). Within a social and historical context, stories can function as a mechanism of mobilising a community and shift perceptions and politics within society, especially for stigmatised individuals (Squire,2005).

An identity needs to be actively constructed by individuals through narration and performance in a believable manner to the audience (Riessman, 2008). Chase (2005) explains that in narrating their stories, participants reinforce, inform, challenge and stand for and against the status quo. This can be done through the individuals telling of stories that resonate with others and encourage them to form social movements that can advocate against stigmatisation of gay persons (Riessman,2008; Squire,2005).

Narratives can be used by individuals for different purposes for different audiences; they can be used to educate, entertain, persuade, overpower and account for actions (Riessman, 2008). Narratives can be used as a way to communicate past experiences to an audience and also make sense of those experiences (Riessman, 2008). They can be used by narrators as way of inviting an audience to see the narrator's point of view. Furthermore, in positioning

themselves into certain characters and roles in stories, narrators may attempt to portray themselves in a preferred manner by the audience (Riessman, 2008)

It therefore becomes clear that narratives are not fixed or definite. They are relational, fluid, contextual and embedded in social interaction. It is for this reason that no one simple definition is adequate in explaining what a narrative is. It is also important to explain the social and cultural contexts in which research participants' narrated experiences are situated. This study thus departs from this call to elicit narratives as constructed from participants' own personal and socio-cultural context. These accounts will provide a better understanding of the lived and witnessed experiences of black gay university students. In particular, the study aims to contribute knowledge around how the social and sexual experiences of black gay university students can be understood.

Conclusion

Thus far, the literature review has argued there are limited studies tracking the social and sexual practices of black gay university students. This includes taking into account the intersection of factors such as race, gender, class and cultural background. Narrative Theory is also a suitable theoretical approach to understand the narratives of black gay university students.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will first present the overall design of the study. Next, the chapter will inform the reader of the sample as well as the data collection and research procedures followed in undertaking the study. The chapter reports on the data analysis technique used to analyse the study's findings. Furthermore, the chapter presents critical considerations of rigour in narrative research. In addition, the chapter highlights the ethical considerations observed in conducting the study.

Research Design

This research study made use of a qualitative method to recognise and inquire about the narratives of the participants. Through narration participants construct meaning (Chase, 2005). Qualitative research is used to inquire and analyse the meaning-making processes of participants through text gathered from interviews or observations (Patton, 2014). This approach enabled the capturing of how people construct meaning of themselves and the world (Patton, 2014). Qualitative research enables an inquiry into the stories that individuals tell to understand their individualistic perspectives and experiences in a context-sensitive manner (Patton, 2014). This form of research methodology helped answer the research questions in an in-depth manner. A small sample of purposely selected participants produced in-depth understanding on the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2014).

In using a qualitative approach, this study allowed the participants' thoughts, experiences and feelings to be narrated in their own words. I, the researcher conducted in-depth narrative (unstructured) interviews to gather the data. These interviews were beneficial in allowing participants control over how they narrated their stories as opposed to structured interviews. Narrative interviews work on basis that interviews are turned into a conversation, where there is a narrator and active listener rather than interviewee and interviewer (Chase, 2005). Narrative interviews are interactive interviews between the researcher and the participant with a conversational intimacy that allows participants to narrate their personal

experiences (Corbin & Morse, 2003). The conversational intimacy with narrative research highlights the importance of viewing narratives as a co-construction between the researcher and participant (Squire, 2013).

Narrative interviews require broad and open questioning and active listening on the part of the researcher (Riessman, 2008). Moreover, the researcher is required to strategically invite more stories from the participant through follow up questions (Riessman, 2008). The aim of the interview is to gain in-depth and detailed accounts from stories, this includes specific events and not merely short and general answers.

The participants were given a space to "tell their story as they see it, feel it and experience it" (Corbin & Morse, 2003, p.339). Chase (2005) advocates for narrative researchers to analyse narratives as embedded within social and cultural constraints. However, Chase (2005) mentions that during the interview the researcher needs to understand stories the way the participant understands them.

Sampling

I made use of purposive and snowball sampling strategies for this study. These opportunistic sampling methods are often used by narrative researchers who aim to study life narratives of participants because randomisation is not privileged (Squire, 2013). Purposive sampling is used to select specific individuals who have the desired characteristics to give relevant and rich insight on the phenomena under investigation (Creswell, 2009). I specifically sought out young black, gay men who are "in the closet", i.e. they have not disclosed their sexual orientation to their parents and only people within the gay community, a few trusted friends and/or their sexual partners will know of their sexual orientation. They were self-identified gay men who have sex with men. They were black, full time university students from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University) and/or University of Johannesburg (UJ). The final sample consisted of four students with an age range of 21 to 24 years.

Snowball sampling is used to create a social network between the researcher and potential participants. This network is created by the researcher communicating with people who can be potential participants or can recruit potential participants through a referral (Chambiss & Schutt, 2012). Snowball sampling was the best method to use in this study

because acquiring gay men who are in the closet was difficult. It was only through building a network that started off with gay people who are open that I could get referrals.

I first contacted LGBTIQA+ organisations from Wits university and the University of Johannesburg via e-mail requesting that my participation information sheet (see Appendix A) be passed on to their members who can recommend participants who are discreet about their sexual orientation and who meet the other sampling criteria mentioned above. However, I did not get contacted by any potential participants sought through the requests from these organisations.

I made use of my personal Facebook account to request recommendations for potential participants to contact me so I can e-mail the participation information sheet. I was successful in acquiring recommendations through Facebook. In addition, I disseminated participation information sheets after a public lecture I gave at the university asking the audience to recommend potential participations. However, I got no contact from this endeavour.

Finally, I made use of internet gay social networking applications. I created profiles on these social networking sites and requested students from Wits university or University of Johannesburg students to communicate with me if they are interested in participating or recommending participations. My e-mail address was provided for members to e-mail me for a participation information sheet or send me their e-mail address for the document to be sent. I was successful in acquiring participants and recommendations through this platform. Participant demographics are presented in the table below.

Participant	Age(years)	Home location	Accommodation
Dingane	23	Rural settlement	Off-campus
Andile	24	Township	Off-campus
Bafana	21	Township	Off-campus
Cele	24	Township	Off-campus

Table 1*: Participant demographic characteristics*

Data collection procedure

After prospective participants contacted me with regards to their interest in participating in the study, I sent them an e-mail with a short description of the aims and rationale of the study and attached the participation information sheet. Five prospective participants agreed to do the

interviews. I set an appointment at a private, convenient and comfortable venue at the university to conduct the interviews. The prospective participants who agreed to participate in the study had to sign a participation consent form (see Appendix B) in order to take part in the research.

Before conducting the unstructured interviews for the study, a video recorded unstructured interview, displaying only myself (the interviewer), was conducted with a volunteer. This video was then screened to my supervisor and members of a broader research project under which my study falls. They critiqued and gave recommendations on my interviewing style.

I started off each interview by explaining the entire research process from data collection towards writing the final report. This included what the research was about, the rationale of the study and what unstructured interviews meant and what I was going to do with the stories they tell me. The aim of starting the interviews with an explanation of the research process was to allow the participants to feel comfortable and enthusiastic in narrating their experiences because they would feel included in the research project and not withhold certain stories due to a lack of understanding of where their information would end up (Murray, 2008). The interviews were conducted in English for my convenience. One participant explained that he expresses himself better in his home language which I understand, he explained some of his narratives and conversations in his home language. I made footnotes of the translation into English for the convenience of my supervisors in the transcripts.

I began each interview by asking the main question: "what are your social and sexual experiences as a black gay man at university?". Two participants struggled to understand this, after an explanation, they went on to narrate their stories. Follow up questions were then guided by how the participants chose to narrate their stories, where they started, what topics they included and in what detail they did so. Further questions and stories arose due to the conversational style of the interviews. The duration of the interviews ranged from one hour thirty minutes to three hours with a short break in between. Due to the unstructured nature of the interviews, I explained to the participants that the interviews may take long and therefore we can decide to take a break during the interview then continue afterwards or schedule another day to a second session. One participant's interview could not be used in the study because not enough data was afforded in the one interview with him. The participant withdrew from the study. The final sample consisted of four participants. All interviews were audio-recorded and

transcribed verbatim. A small sample size of four participants was appropriate to gain rich insight into parts of the individual participants' lives through lengthy interviews (Chase, 2005; Squire, 2013).

Data analysis

Narrative analysis.

To analyse the data, a case-centred narrative analysis of the narratives was used. According to Riessman (2008) narrative analysis is a family of methods that interpret texts in storied form. Narrative analysis is characterised by various interdisciplinary lenses that are used to capture "biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them" (Chase, 2005, p.651), using fluid methodologies over time. The analysis of narratives can be done in a case-centred approach. A case-centred approach is complimented for its ability to recognise participants as agentic and subjective (Riessman, 2008). In these cases, "particular histories of individuals are preserved, resulting in an accumulation of detail that is assembled into a 'fuller' picture of the individual" (Riessman, 2008, p.11). A case-centred analysis was used to develop a theoretical understanding of a phenomenon and not a statistical generalisation (Riessman, 2008). A narrative analysis "opens up forms of telling about experience, not simply the content to which language refers" (Riessman, 2000, p.697).

Riessman (2008) states that there are various perspectives of how to analyse narratives that may conflict with one another. Throughout history there have been different debates and critics for different theorisations of how to view and analyse narratives (Riessman, 2002). A significant change occurred during the 'narrative turn' (see Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2002; 2008; Squire, 2005) where narrators were viewed as not merely using language to refer to events but actively constructing meaning through the interaction of narrating. Some theorists analysed narratives with an interest in the story content and structure; later other theorists focused on analysing the discourses within narratives (Bleakley, 2005). There was a move from the question: '*What* is the story about?' towards the question: 'In what *way* was meaning constructed in telling the story?' (Bleakley, 2005). Therefore, an analysis of narratives pays attention to how narrators narrate their experiences as well as what they communicate (Chase, 2005).

An analysis of narratives pays attention to the fact that multiple interpretations are a characteristic of narrative research. "The worlds of readers and texts, speakers and listeners must be brought together, co-inhabited, in order for understanding to occur" (Squire, 2013, p.57). It is common for narrative researchers to monitor evolving interpretations within the materials with other interested parties (Squire, 2013). It is for this reason that a peer-review of some of my interpretations was done with other researchers.

There is attention to how narrators sequence, organise and structure events and how they use language to give meaning to their experiences (Riessman, 2000; 2008). Squire (2013) states that: "'stories' seem to promise human universality and accessibility, while analysis of them requires a rewardingly comprehensive attention to individual, social and cultural dimensions of language and meaning" (p. 9). As stated by Esin and Squire (2013), narratives are contextual, "they do not have universal currency; they draw on and work within social, cultural and historical symbolic resources. The 'reading' of stories may therefore shift or break down between distinct social, cultural and historical worlds" (p.4). Therefore, while I appreciate the subjectivity and agency of the participants' stories, their narrated experiences are informed by the society and culture in which they are situated (Atkinson & Delmont, 2006). Therefore, social and cultural contexts are to be considered when analysing narratives.

The use of language by narrators to position characters within narratives is another opinion of narratives. In positioning themselves into certain characters and roles in stories, narrators attempt to persuade the audience in viewing them in a preferred manner (Riessman, 2008). Narrators can position themselves as a character within the story or as an observer of other characters' actions (Chase, 2005). In narrating their stories during the interview, participants are enacting a performance in which linguistic resources are used to account for and evaluate their constructed identities and their experiences (Atkinson & Delmont, 2006; Riessman, 2008).

A thematic narrative analysis is one out of the various methods of analysing narratives (Riessman, 2008). Others include structural, performative and visual narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008). A common feature amongst all the forms of narrative analysis is their inquiry into the content of the narratives. Thematic narrative analysis as mentioned by Riessman (2008) is the most commonly used analysis by novice narrative researchers because it is straightforward. I used the thematic narrative analysis for this reason. The thematic narrative analysis was guided by Crossley (2007), Riessman (2008) and Bleakley (2005) to

analyse the data in this study. Thematic narrative analysis focuses mainly on the content of the stories, focusing on 'what is said' (Riessman, 2008). In a thematic narrative analysis, themes or patterns are within individual cases and not across all the cases in the study (Riessman, 2008; Chase, 2005). These themes were drawn by the researcher from each narrative text inductively (Bleakley, 2005) as well as from a prior theoretical lens (Riessman, 2008).

Riessman (2008) cautions that there is no one way of conducting a thematic narrative analysis and that each researcher shapes his or her analysis in a manner that will best suit the research aims. It is for this reason that although I analyse the narratives I collected by focusing on the content, each story was contextualised within the culture and history it was situated (Bleakley, 2005). According to Bleakley (2005) this involves asking the following two questions: "What happens in a story, appreciated as an overall pattern" and "How the pattern of a story unfolds taken in context" (p.537).

Over and above analysing the content of narratives, I took note of how participants position themselves as well as other characters to understand the meanings of their experiences in a way that they wanted to be interpreted. During a conversation, a narrator tells stories in which he or she positions himself in relation to the other characters in a certain way through the roles he or she constructs (Bamberg, 1997). In doing so the narrator constructs their self and others' (Bamberg, 1997).

The unstructured interviews that I conducted brought about a conversational interaction between the role of interviewer/audience (myself) and the role of interviewee/narrator. During this interaction the participants aimed to construct themselves and others in ways that they wanted to be understood. In positioning analysis, I looked at how the participant positioned the characters in his story, how he positions himself to the audience in the story and how he positions himself to himself? (Bamberg, 1997).

Audio-recorded unstructured interviews were conducted. I first asked the participants open-ended questions that allowed them to explain their narratives in their own words and in collaboration with my active listening and asking for clarification (Riessman, 2008).

Guided by recommendations by Crossley (2007), Riessman (2008) and Bleakley (2005) I took the following steps:

a) I transcribed the audio-recorded interviews verbatim. I went back and listened to the audio-recordings again while reading the transcript to verify that the correct words were

transcribed and also taking note of the tone used by the participants in narrating their stories. This allowed me to be reflective about how I conducted the interview. I then retrospectively typed a short reflection of the interview.

b) I worked with one interview transcript at a time. After re-reading the transcript, I went through the transcript again, this time identifying stories within the interview. Identifying where a story starts and ends can be challenging as Riessman (2008) states because participants can move around from story to story. I nonetheless highlighted different sections of the transcript that could form a coherent story by looking for a plot, characters, setting and time.

c) I went through each line of the identified stories to understand what each participant was communicating through the story, paying attention to the question or statement the participant was responding to. I got to acquaint myself with the narratives fully and in reading the different stories started noting emerging patterns within all the stories. This involved my reading through the transcripts again and paying attention to "develop a grasp of the principal elements of the personal narrative'' (Crossley, 2007, p.140).

d) My co-supervisor and two of my research colleagues (who were not students) were given an extract of a story from one of the transcripts (see Appendix D). Even though these colleagues were removed from the participant, no identifying information could be ascertained from the story. We discussed the codes that I noted without any theory. I noted down their different interpretations and went back to review the transcripts. This allowed me to rethink some of the preliminary analyses.

e) My supervisor and I then read through all the transcripts and looked at preliminary emerging patterns amongst all transcripts and then formed a model to analyse how each participant negotiates their experiences within the culture and environment their narratives were situated (see Appendix E). I then went through all the interview transcripts and coded them per the model (see Appendix F). Developing a model is beneficial in allowing close attention to stories within cases (Bleakley, 2005).

f) I prepared a PowerPoint presentation explaining the background and aims of the study, narrative theory and the model. I presented this to my co-supervisor and colleagues. With the theoretical background in mind we went through the same transcript extract as before and discussed the story with the theory in mind. Again, I noted down their different viewpoints and I went on to review the full transcript by myself.

g) I combined the codes into final themes. I created a codebook, under each theme I put the different stories that form part of the theme. I included a brief description of the plot then the corresponding code, extract, narrative tone and the positioning analysis.

h) Identifying the 'narrative tone' meant paying careful attention to the tone that the participants used when narrating their stories to me and how the tone is used when talking about past feelings, emotions and events.

i) Crossley (2007) advises that the next step as weaving all the above steps to form a coherent story and writing the final report. I went on to report on some of the reflections of the interviews. I reported on each theme with each participant's individual narratives.

j) I presented a PowerPoint presentation of my report to my supervisor and other members of the broader research project in which I am involved. They gave me feedback on which aspects of my report I should alter. I then went to finalise the research report.

Critical considerations for rigour in narrative research

Riessman (2008) advocates for 'pragmatic use' to be a measure of trustworthiness in narrative research. This, according to Riessman (2008) provides a positive response to the question of whether narrative research can become a basis for further research to be thought of. According to Riessman (2008) an attempt to establish trustworthiness as used in other forms of research may not be suitable for narrative research. In narrative research, the narrator is both the participant during the interview and the researcher in his research report (Riessman, 2008). This is because 'truth' in narratives is never complete nor factual as there are multiple realities and truths within narratives (Riessman, 2008). Narratives are purposefully constructed by the narrator to persuade an audience to view events from the narrator's point of view (Riessman, 2008). Furthermore, narratives are then reconfigured by the audience; their construction is never a completed shape in a text but in the reader (Squire, 2005).

Riessman (2008) states that a good narrative research can persuade the reader that its interpretations are plausible, believable and reasonable. This is strengthened when theoretical claims are backed up with evidence from participants' accounts and multiple interpretations are considered (Riessman, 2008). Riessman (2008) offers the following suggestions in producing pragmatic narrative research. This include a clear definition of which definition of narrative is used, what theory frames the research, a thorough step-by-step explanation of the

use of methodology, the explanation of the extent in which language and form is used, as well as an explanation of the local and societal context and the acknowledgement of different interpretations(Riessman,2008). Riessman (2008) suggests discussing and considering different interpretations with other researchers in different disciplines when conducting narrative research. This was done in my research with various colleagues in different disciplines with the social sciences.

This research report is a 'meta-narrative'; a narrative about narratives, constructed by the researcher. There is an overlapping relationship between narrators and audiences in a narrative research which occurs in a procedure from the actual 'experience' towards its interpretation by the reader (Riessman, 2008). This procedure followed the following steps of interpretation:

i. The first narrator is the research participant who interpreted and constructed a narrative of his experiences within the immediate context of the interview for the specific audience, being myself (and perhaps the reader).
ii. This narrated experience was then interpreted by myself within the immediate context of the interview and these interpretations lead to more questions which influenced further interpretation and construction by the participant.
iii. The methodological process followed from transcription to analysis involved further interpretations. The narrative (being my research report) was also interpreted and constructed for a specific audience, being the reader.
iv. The reader in reading the report interprets and constructs meaning in his/her mind of the participants' narrated experiences.

Reflexivity is "a process that involves conscious self-reflection on the part of researchers to make explicit their potential influence on the research process" (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011, p19).

From the process explained above I needed to be reflexive about numerous factors:

a) I am an openly black gay man and a LGBTIQA+ rights activist within the same university as some of the participants. This may have been known by the participants and would have thus influenced the way they constructed their narrated experiences to

me, their audience. I deduced this from the kind of "gay insider" language and reference to spaces that the participants used in the interview.

b) Secondly, as an academic, the interpretations and analysis of the participants were reconfigured with academic theory when presented to my supervisors and research colleagues. This reconfiguration was done to persuade this audience that my interpretations and analysis were plausible.

c) Finally, the research report (which considered the various interpretations) was constructed in a manner that seeks to persuade the audience (being the final reader) that it is rigorous.

It is evident that various meaning was created in the research process and that access to the actual experiences of the participants is constructed and influenced by social interaction and cultural contexts. It would be false for narrative researchers to make the claim that their research empowers the participants voices because their research report may not necessarily mirror the actual experience of the participants (Riessman, 2008). This is because narrative researchers:

> "develop their own voice(s) as they construct others' voices and realities; they narrate results in ways that are both enabled and constrained by the social resources and circumstances embedded in their disciplines, cultures and historical moments; and they write or perform their work for particular audiences" Chase (2005, p.657).

In this study, I was cautious in not imposing any personal biases during the planning and analysis of the data. I took note of any biases that may impact on the study. These include that I am an openly gay man and a LGBTIQA+ rights and HIV and AIDS awareness activist. In this regard, I sought not to impose any political opinions or biases on the topic of social and sexual experiences of gay men, who unlike me are in the closet.

The interaction between the researcher and interviewee influences research outputs, it is therefore important for researchers to be reflexive about the interpersonal relationship that was created (Hennik et al., 2011). I built a comfort rapport with the participants. I was attentive, interested, empathic, sensitive and non-judgmental during the interviews. I showed no judgement towards the participants' decision to conceal their sexual orientation. Instead, in narrating the story of how I came about choosing the research topic it was evident that I supported their decision to be open or discreet about their sexual orientation.

Follow up interviews were conducted with the participants to discuss how they experienced the first interview. These follow-up interviews were audio-recorded and participants were given another participation consent form to sign. Participants explained to have been comfortable throughout the interview and felt free to narrate their experiences to me. I attempted as much as possible to make the interviews feel like a naturally occurring conversation. This allowed the participants to feel free and eager to narrate their stories.

Ethical considerations

Due to the potentially hostile environment that research on gay people is situated, Meezan and Martin (2009) caution that researchers need to strictly adhere to ethical principles within their academic discipline in order to protect participants. In this regard, I attempted to protect the participants from being identified in this report and being comfortable during the interview as much as possible.

Before carrying out this study, I obtained ethical clearance from the internal ethics committee of the School of Human and Community Development, University of the Witwatersrand. All prospective participants were explained thoroughly the aim of the research and its focus area and how the data will be collected and analysed. Participation in the research was voluntary and participants were able to remove themselves from the study at any point. Prospective research participants were given a participation information sheet (see appendix A), which included an explanation of the above, as well as other ethical rights of participants.

Before conducting each interview, a thorough step-by step-process of the research was explained not only to arouse interest in the participants but also to inform them who will have access to their stories. I explained and gave the participants a participation consent form (see appendix B) to sign, emphasising that they will remain anonymous and referred to by pseudonyms in any discussions prior the final report with my colleagues and in presentations or publication of the research thereafter. The transcript review was specifically not done with students from the broader research project of the study because some of them are within the LGBTIQA+ community. The transcript review was rather conducted with my other colleagues who are not students. The consent form required that the participants fill out their names and then sign at the bottom. The first participant was reluctant to writing his name, he suggested

writing down his second name. I agreed to this. After consulting with my supervisor, I was advised that the participants can include their initials and surname or just their names.

The participants were informed that the recordings of the interview will be transcribed and only the researcher, his supervisors and a research assistant will have access to the full transcriptions. Participants were informed that the interview will expect them to tell stories about their personal lives. However, the recordings and transcriptions of the interviews will be stored in a password protected file on my private computer. I told the participants that direct quotes and extracts from the interview transcripts will be used in reviews of the transcripts and in the final report. I assured them that the names of people they may mention in the interview will be omitted or changed, and any information that may make their identity known will be removed or disguised. Where participants gave out names of people during the interview, in the transcriptions I disguised this by placing the first two letters of the name followed by asterisks.

In the report or presentations, I do not give out any demographic information without justification. To further protect the participants, the name of the university they were from is not included in the report. The interviews were conducted in a private room at university that the participants felt comfortable. Prior to conducting the interviews, I would wait in the room and direct the participants to the room so we are not seen together. I assured the participants that if we were to come across each other in any social setting I will not initiate any communication with them. Additionally, I did not inform the people who recommended them to me whether the participants participated in the study or not.

The participants were advised that if the study arouses any anxiety or distress they can contact The Out Helpline, the Triangle Project Gay & Lesbian Helpline or Lifeline. Wits University students were advised to go to the CCDU for free face-to-face counselling or the Emthojeni Clinic. University of Johannesburg students were advised to go to the Psychological Services and Career Development (PsyCad) Centre for free face-to-face counselling. Contact details of the above organisations were provided on the participation information sheet the participants were e-mailed.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to first present the research design of the overall study. The chapter indicated the sampling as well as data collection procedures followed in undertaking the study.

The chapter reported on the data analysis technique used to analyse the study findings. Furthermore, the chapter presented critical considerations of rigour when conducting narrative research. The chapter ended with highlighting the critical ethical considerations observed in conducting the study.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the narratives of each participant in a case study form where I present and discuss each participant individually. I will begin each case with reflections of the participant's interview. Then the chapter will move on to present some of the narratives in themes and end each case study with a discussion of the themes. Participants' themes are presented in Table 2 below:

Participant	**Theme**
Dingane	1. The master of identity performances 2. Rejection of femininity in gay men 3. Preference for performed identity to heterosexual audience 4. Fears of sexual intimacy
Andile	1. Grindr, relationships and sex 2. The university space is safe for transitioning 3. The university space and networks 4. Negotiation between religion and homosexuality in university space
Bafana	1. Homophobia on campus 2. Coming out will disturb the order 3. Preference for female over male university peers 4. Being in the closet and dating
Cele	1. Discomfort from having sexual intercourse with men 2. Having girlfriends to hide being gay 3. Coming out in stages and fitting in with heterosexual friends 4. Negotiating dating men and being in the closet

Table 2*: Overview of themes*

Individual narratives

Reflections of Dingane's interview

My interview with Dingane took approximately two and a half hours. Dingane was a 23-year-old university final year undergraduate student at the time of the interview. I include the level of study that Dingane was in to give an idea of how long he has been in the university space. He grew up in a rural area outside the province in which the university is situated. I include the area he comes from to give a background of the culture in which his narratives may be based. During the university term, he stayed in student accommodations outside the university with other students.

Dingane seemed very comfortable during the interview. He narrated his stories in detail. This made it easier for me to ask follow-up questions for an in-depth understanding. The interview gave him an opportunity to evaluate retrospectively how he chose to construct his experiences. At various points in the interview, he would laugh while narrating some of the choices he made. While describing how he specifically felt about his experiences of being in the closet his tone was sombre. However, while narrating most stories his tone seemed enthusiastic; he could reflect and even laugh at some of the decisions he made. From the amount of detail Dingane went into narrating his university experiences, I got the impression he had introspected these aspects of his life before. The interview gave him the opportunity to share his stories with someone and so he was eager to narrate his experiences.

Significant themes from Dingane's interview

1.	The master of identity performances
2.	Rejection of femininity in gay men
3.	Preference for performed identity to heterosexual audience
4.	Fears of sexual intimacy

1. Theme: The master of identity performances.

Dingane narrated how he had to alter his behaviour to be identified as heterosexual by his peers in high school. He explained to have been very effeminate growing up. This he said, made his peers label him gay. He explained how he had to change schools a lot until he was convinced that his peers could associate his behaviour as stereotypical to a heterosexual boy. When he came to university, he explained how the space gave him the freedom of choosing whether to be open or continue hiding his sexual orientation. He explained how he chose to continue behaving in a masculine manner as a way of hiding his sexual orientation.

Dingane narrated a story that involved him and two of his heterosexual friends at university. One of the friends was explained to be effeminate because of "*the way he talks, his hand gestures, he is at the verge of being gay*". The one friend wanted Dingane to assist him in changing the behaviour of their heterosexual friend to fit a more heterosexual role.

In thinking about what his friend said, Dingane explained the irony in the story because he was gay and yet his performance of a stereotypical heterosexual man was so pronounced that one his friends approached him for assistance. Dingane narrated: "*To me it was weird because I am the gay one but I guess I have mastered the art of being straight*". He explained that stories like these gave him the constant reassurance that he is protected by being in the closet. Dingane explained:

> *...to me being in the closet means I need validation from other people, I need people to every time, uhm, reaffirm that I'm straight in their eyes which means that I do and act and say what they regard as being straight. So my closet is shielded by-I don't know maybe people's ignorance or what they term to be gay...*

Dingane explained that some of his friends think a female student with whom he is close friends, is his girlfriend and he does not deny this when they ask him. However, this female student is explained to hate gay people but does not know that Dingane is gay. When I asked him if the female student suspects that Dingane is gay, he narrated:

> *That's interesting 'cause she hates gay people....at one point I used to go out and take a weekend go out to visit family then to her she would think that I was out with a girl. I didn't deny it. I just left her to her own conclusion which again was convenient for me.*

So I have mastered the art of being straight. I do however think it's wrong because as I said when I was young I was fem[1]*, like ridiculously fem. But I didn't know what was going on, I thought it was- I was just me, I didn't see anything wrong with that but I changed, I have changed. 'Cause now even the way I walk, the way I talk, my mannerism it now fits into the fire that if you are gay then it's a choice and you can change so in that regard I think I've ruined it for the gay* ((laughs)) *the gay community.*

Analysis

Dingane positions himself as a knowledgeable antagonist who manipulates the misconceptions of the other characters. He performs a heterosexual character so profound that a heterosexual character seeks advice from him on how to correct effeminate behaviour from the other heterosexual character. He is also able to manipulate another character who is homophobic. He also positions himself as an antagonist who betrays other characters with whom he shares the same stigmatised sexual orientation by dissociating himself from the *"ridiculously fem"* behaviour that is stigmatised. He justifies his actions by stating that: *"I didn't know what was going on, I thought it was-I was just me"*. He positions himself away from a victimised and ignorant character towards a knowledgeable and manipulative character.

Dingane performs gender as a defence mechanism against the homophobia he perceives is present at his university. For Dingane, his performance needs to be convincing to his friends for him to hide his sexual orientation and stay in the closet. Dingane knows that there is a social narrative that bases sexual orientation as a manifestation of stereotypical gendered behaviour. This narrative is based on hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity, in which Dingane's friend is not complying with and therefore needs correction. Attributing effeminate behaviour to being gay shows that Dingane's friend define the label 'gay' not based on sexual practices or attractions but take it to mean a man who defies heteronormative ways of behaving (Kekana & Dietrich,2017)

Dingane expressed however, his sense of guilt for his performance because he contributes this heteronormative thinking which he realises is wrong but leaves his friends to their *"own conclusions"*. Furthermore, his transition, from being effeminate to masculine, contributes to the held social narrative that gay people choose and can change their sexual

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[1] A colloquial term used in the gay community that denotes to feminine behaviour.

orientation. He regards that narrative as *"fire"* signifying that it contributes to the homophobia *"the gay community"* experiences.

2. Theme: Rejection of femininity in gay men.

In narrating the story of his effeminate heterosexual friend, Dingane explained how he is uncomfortable interacting with effeminate gay men. He explained that, this is not due to his need to hide his sexual orientation because his discomfort arises regardless of the space in which he is situated. Dingane explained that if a heterosexual man displayed the same behaviour in his presence, he would not feel uncomfortable. He explained that he got used to behaving *"like a straight guy"*. He narrated:

> *I just get uncomfortable. Which is quite strange because like said I have a friend who is colourful*[2] *but he is straight. But because I know he is straight it does not matter but if I know that someone isn't straight and they act the same way that my friend does then it becomes a problem to me because like I said I get uncomfortable. So yeah, I guess I- I have somehow gotten used to being straight. Like it's in my- I can't say it's in my gene or my blood- but it is second nature to me. That's what I know, even if I am alone that's what I know.*

Dingane explained that he interacted with other gay students from gay online dating applications. There he could have conversations with other gay students. He met some of the people he chatted with in person with the condition that they are not effeminate. He put inspections in place to determine if the gay men he talking to were effeminate or not. Dingane explained:

> *If I chat to you, I know what a-a fem guy is mostly to say when I ask a certain question[...] My biggest fear was finding someone who knew me...who is out, you know what I'm trying to say, out of the closet and people know that this person is gay. I didn't want to meet that kind of a person. That was my biggest biggest problem or fear or worry...because they might say something one day. But some you can tell from their pictures that "ahh this one...is not straight- straight acting"*

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[2] "Colourful" here is used by Dingane to mean effeminate.

Analysis

It appears then that by seeing effeminate behaviour in gay men threatens Dingane's internalised *"straight-acting"* role of a masculine heterosexual male. He has internalised the performance of the masculine heterosexual male that was meant to be a strategy to hide his sexual orientation. It appears that even in the absence of the audience he is trying to mislead, he still adopts the masculine heterosexual role.

3. Theme: Preference for performed identity to heterosexual audience.

Dingane expressed that he only has a few gay friends that he sees occasionally, he spends most of his time with his heterosexual friends or alone. Although Dingane must hide his sexual orientation amongst his heterosexual friends, he explained that he prefers their company because he fits in more with them as they share similar interests. He explained:

> *The thing is all the things that I do now that uhm I regard as being straight, I enjoy them. I enjoy watching football, I enjoy cars, I love cars, I love car shows, car movies, I even go watch car shows. It's something I enjoy doing. Uhm but there are also plenty of gay things which I also can't do, which is why I can't chill with gay people because I don't like some of their music, you know- I'm not generalising, I don't like most of the music that gay people that I know listen to...*

Dingane narrated stories of how he employed mechanisms to defend or "shield" his being in the closet. Dingane's preferred defence mechanisms are behaving in a masculine manner, isolating himself and withdrawing from conversations about gay people with his heterosexual friends, keeping a few gay friends and only meeting gay men from dating sites who are masculine. He explains that he has trained his mind to think and converse like a heterosexual male. He however limits himself from getting too comfortable as this might make him slip up and say something that may make them question his sexual orientation. "*It's a slippery slope as they say. Ya I have to tread carefully*" he stated. He further explained that he cannot say something negative about gay people as a way hiding his association to them. He condemned that as being wrong. He explained that the mechanisms he employed to hide his sexual orientation such as adopting heterosexual character involved a sense of truth to it because he enjoys the activities that come with it. He explained:

It is as though my mind tells me- its trained to be straight at all times. Uhm yeah although I find it difficult to ridicule gay people amongst my straight friends. I have never, I've never done that[...]I can't say bad things about gay people so as to further shield my closet. I can't do that...I think it's wrong, it is one of those reasons why I can't date a girl because it won't be true. The thing is all the things that I do now that uhm I regard as being straight, I enjoy them.

Dingane explained that coming out of the closet for him will merely mean that people will know of his sexual orientation but he would still not want to associate with gay people or be in a space that is deemed to be for gay people. He explained:

It was very easy for me...to build a closet because I already liked those things, except for girls that is. Which is to say even if one day I were to come out of the closet I still wouldn't go out to gay clubs, I hate those, I hate clubs in general but gay clubs are worse. I still wouldn't go to gay clubs ((laughs)) I would still do what I do now uhm I still wouldn't hold a guy's hand in public uhm I guess I just- nothing will change basically cause I would prefer to kiss whoever I'm dating at that time in private. I prefer it that way. The only thing that will change is that people would know. That's the only thing.

Analysis

Dingane has adopted his masculine heterosexual identity so much so that he enjoys activities and interests that are associated with heterosexuality and masculinity. He distances himself from what he considers *"gay things"*. As I have argued earlier, Dingane has a good sense of understanding of gender and sexual orientation. However, it appears that he often thinks like the heterosexual people he regards as ignorant. He seemed to have accepted the stereotype that heterosexual men and gay men have different interests. This contradicts his being gay by claiming to enjoy the activities and having interests that according to his thinking are not meant for him as a gay man. After making those statements, he realised the error in his thinking and defends it with the objection: *"I'm not generalising"*. Saying this then allowed him to be gay still but have heterosexual interests. He positions himself as one of the gay people who deviate from what he considers gay interests and activities.

4. Theme: Fears of sexual intimacy.

Upon moving to Johannesburg, Dingane explained that he joined online gay dating applications to interact with other gay people and found out about their lives to assure himself that he is not abnormal. He explained:

> *...for me the notion of abnormal, the idea of normal, which is to me and not Oxford- when you can't find something- someone else who is doing it then it's a problem with you. So I'm just checking nje are they people who are thinking the way I'm thinking, doing what I'm doing.*

He later attempted to form romantic relationships but he narrated that the relationships were short. This was due to his discomfort with sexual intimacy that would involve having someone else in his space. He explained:

> *I'm not fully there. I want to be there but yeah like if I am kissing someone, something clicks inside me and I feel like 'this is wrong, I don't know what is wrong but it is wrong. I can't be doing this'. I had opportunities to date someone but when you want to date someone you have to put- you have to allow that person into your space. Uhm ya you have to give them allowance to be in your space. I can't do that.*

To alleviate his discomfort, Dingane later attempted to meet gay men online with the intention of merely having sex without forming a romantic relationship.

> *Sex for me when I did have it, it's supposed to almost be an instantaneous thing, it happens then I leave, it happens then I leave. But recently for the past year, or more, I think I'm going onto two years now I haven't been able to like be with someone uhm we will meet for 'fun'.*[3]

He narrated a story where he met with a gay man solely to have sex with him and parting ways after without any expectations of communicating afterwards. He explained that this is how he decided to have interactions with gay men without allowing them into his space. He narrated that he met a particular gay man. When he arrived at the man's place, without speaking, they had sex and he would *"leave"*. When I asked if by *"leave"* he meant he would part ways with

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[3] The term "fun" is an informal term used by online dating site users to mean causal sex with no intention of forming an emotional relationship.

the man without speaking he replied that he would not just immediately part ways but would engage in conversation after the sexual encounter. He explained:

> *There were no strings attached but at the end of the day we are human I can't help it but want to know more about a person. The leave is not just to pick up your trousers, but rather uhm 'sho*[4]*' and 'sharp sharp' maybe after we chill for like 30mins and then you go your way.*

When I asked him if having sex without any emotional intimacy is what he wanted he replied: "*That's what worked; it was not what I preferred.*"

He explained that he would rather meet gay people from the dating applications to form friendships with them and engage in intellectual talk and not necessarily in person. He explained that even having sex with a man who he is not romantically involved with is still uncomfortable. He explained:

> *...I start to think: 'like really, this is what you want to? This is what you want to do? Like this, it is wrong. What would people think?' If you are in the closet, that's what you deal with every time, what will people think? That's not to say however that closet guys don't move around but for me, cause this closet thing is very very painful, its huge, uhm... It is big. yeah...I mean that most of the day that is what I think about. So you can imagine, that is what I think about most of the time, I can't forget it because if I forget it then I would slip up.*

Analysis

Dingane seems to have adopted a heterosexual performance however, he is aware of his sexual orientation. It seemed he yearned to interact with people whom he shares sexual interests. He perhaps felt a sense isolation from his heterosexual friends in that regard. Dingane may have also felt a sense of abnormality over his sexual orientation and communicating with other gay men and hearing about their experiences gave him the assurance that he is *"normal"*.

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[4] The term "sho" is a South African slang word derived from the English word "sure". Its use is context-specific. It can be used to acknowledge, greet, or thank someone or to reaffirm something. In this context, it can be translated as "thank you" to which the other party replied, "sharp sharp", meaning, "okay".

Discussion of Dingane's narratives

Dingane's narratives highlight that the university space is not seen as a welcoming space for some gay students to be open about their sexual orientation (Arndt & de Bruin, 2006). Many universities in South Africa still perpetuate heteronormativity and thus marginalise gay students because of their sexual orientation (Jagessar & Msibi, 2015; Rothman & Simmonds,2015). This leaves gay students to use certain defence mechanisms to hide their sexual orientation (Adamcyzk & Pitt, 2009; Graziano, 2004b; Sumeru, 2012). Dingane chooses to perform a 'hypermasculine' gender in manipulating his peers to hide his sexual orientation similar to other gay men struggling with social pressures of conformity (Belous, Wampler & Warmels-Herring, 2015). Dingane uses gender as an accomplishment that individuals maintain through continuous performance to manipulate his peers by performing a man (Butler, 1990; West & Fenstermaker, 1993).

Due to his being labelled gay in high school based on his effeminate behaviour, Dingane began to value hegemonic masculinity. In pursuing this form of masculinity Dingane could fit in with his heterosexual peers and not be ridiculed (Belous et al., 2015; Plummer, 2001). Dingane's continuous consciousness of performing a masculine gender may signify a defence mechanism against the ridicule he experienced in childhood for being effeminate as explained by Taywaditep (2002). Ironically, Dingane confirms that a pursuit of hegemonic masculinity may make one internalise femmephobic attitudes which lead him to become uncomfortable around effeminate gay men and internalise homophobia (Pascoe, 2012; Sánchez et al., 2016).

Reflections of Andile's interview

At the time of the interview, Andile was a 24-year-old university undergraduate student whose home was at a township in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Andile moved to the university in Gauteng after dropping out of the university he was attending back in his home province. During the university term, he stayed in a flat outside the university. The interview with Andile took approximately two hours. It was the first interview I did and it went well. Andile seemed apprehensive at first about talking about his sexual practices, he kept asking for clarification about what I wanted to know. After assuring him, that the interview is unstructured and that I am interested in any stories he is willing to share he then opened up. I started the topic by

narrating a story about a research presentation I attended that involved the sexual practices of gay men. Andile then began narrating stories about his sexual practices and experiences. Andile explained his use of online dating application and internet sites to meet other gay men. He explained his different reasons for being on these platforms.

We then went on to talk about the university space and he narrated stories about how he got to understand sexuality from a different perspective as opposed to how it was viewed back home. He explained the prejudice and discrimination against openly gay students at the university. Andile then went on to narrate stories of how he needs to adapt his behaviour when he is around his heterosexual friends. He then went back to narrate stories about how he learned to do this because his home province was restrictive. Andile narrated stories concerning his religious beliefs and their clash with his sexual orientation. He then narrated his experiences of gay relationships and his sexual practices. The interview then proceeded towards talking about his gay networks on campus and how it compared to the university he was previously attending.

Significant themes from Andile's interview

1. Grindr, relationships and sex
2. The university space is a safe for transitioning
3. The university space and networks
4. Negotiation between religion and homosexuality in university space

1. Theme: Grindr, relationships and sex.

Andile narrated that he had his first relationship with another man when he came to the university in Gauteng. He described his previous university as not welcoming of gay students. Andile narrated that when he came to the university in Gauteng, he met his first boyfriend at a gay club that is located close to the university. He narrated how the relationship ended because he, Andile, was unfaithful and was unable to love someone else. He narrated that while in the relationship he would have sex with other people including his boyfriend's friend. He described this as *"evil"*. He attributed this to his parents' failed marriage when he was a child and his father's multiple marriages. He narrated:

The first relationship, I did the bad things, I was this horrible cheater person that just did horrible, evil things. I was just evil because I didn't know how to love in gay relationship, like I didn't know how to love period. My thing is that I don't know, I don't know what are the norms then. Cause like when I was six my parents got divorced, my father got married three times and like you know, there was no affection that I have seen from him and in terms of relationships.

Andile narrated that he later felt lonely and decided to download an online dating application called Grindr[5] to form friendships or find a relationship. However, he found that the users on that application were not interested in romantic relationships. Andile explained that he would have preferred a romantic relationship that would begin with two people being friends, getting to know each other and then forming a relationship. He explained this to be how heterosexuals formed relationships. He later decided to stay single and meet gay men to have sexual intercourse with the condition that they are attractive to him, if not he would befriend them. Andile narrated:

I get lonely; I've been single over a year now so it's like this. Cause like I don't go out and meet guys you know, so I was like let's download this thing and see what happens. But like nothing materialised out of it. I don't think anything materialised out of like these apps because like my relationship that I had with someone I met in person for the first time, like we were out in Melville and we met and got to know each other and it became a relationship. Usually on Grindr what I found is that people hook up and either wanna have sex or you hook up [6]and you're like 'uuuh na this is not going to work out' and you go your separate ways or you become friends. So my reason for going on Grindr was to- I think I was looking for a relationship and at the same time I was not looking for a relationship, I was just bored or lonely [...] at the same time because gay guys are like emotionally all over the place. They are like extreme whores or ((laughs)) like extreme recruiters[7] and that's weird and you find that it is difficult to find a decent guy who you can actually go on dates and be in like normal relationships, this is very

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[5] Grindr is a type of smartphone application used by gay and bisexual men. It uses the phone's physical location to display other users who are in the proximate location (Blackwell, Birnholtz & Abbott C, 2014).
[6] A hook up describes a non-committed meeting between people usually with the intention of having sex (Kuperberg & Padgett,2015).
[7] The word "recruiters" here is used to refer to gay men introducing other gay men to their existing acquaintances. Thus, creating a network.

rare. Cause like gay people I don't know how often they go on dates and get to know each other and then let it progress gradually like how heterosexual relationship would do...

In the same story, Andile went on to narrate how he was communicating with a gay couple on Grindr. The couple were in a relationship however, they wanted to have sex together or individually with other people. Andile communicated online with the couple about the prospects of meeting. He was too intimated about the prospects of having sex with both at the same time so he met with only one. He later became friends with them. He narrated:

I actually met this couple on Grindr and they're like, a couple looking for other people. And I met with this guy who was nice actually he was one of the couple cause I was intimidated by meeting both of them. So we were talking about Grindr you know and they just looking to add spice to the relationship, that's what they are there for, to add spice to their relationship. He and I became friends, like I think I'm more friends with them.

I asked Andile which form of dating he would prefer between his distinction of how heterosexual and homosexual relationships are formed, he explained:

I think if there is chemistry and I like the person and we can chat then I would like to know you first cause, cause it's about- it's like sustainability you know, so if you were getting to know him and he was going to know you and you'd be on the same page then we can take it slow, we wouldn't rush but you know if it's like I'm horny you're horny then let's just shag then you shag[8]*[...] If you know I just wanna get laid and we hook up don't say 'ah yeah I wanna get to know you and we should be dating' and bla bla bla...*

Andile expressed his lack of confidence in gay relationship. He decided to stay single and not seek out a relationship because of all the sex, promiscuity and lack of commitment in gay relationships. He also explained he met someone and they liked each other and formed a relationship but Andile ended it because of his lack of trust. Andile explained:

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[8] In this context, the word "shag" means have sex without any the intention of forming any emotional or romantic relationship

[Relationships] are just hard work, especially gay relationships. It is very difficult to find someone who will want to make it work with you even when you fight a lot, it's difficult to find that in gay relationships, it's all about sex, sex, sex. Even if you try a relationship, the first fight you have then it's like 'we need to break up I don't think we are working out'. No one, no one wants to work through stuff, it's hard work and commitment I can't be the only one who is fighting to make the relationship work and I'm tryna make the sin work and also the promiscuity aspect of it it's just sad because gays are bitches. Men are bitches, straight or gay. So imagine if it is two guys, it's like a situation where it is two bitches. There is just cheating. That's why I might stay single until I die.

I got this other guy but I had trust issues, cause I had serious relationships that I had broken off and I was just single ever since. But I would just have hook ups... I have given up on [relationships].

Towards the end of the interview, Andile narrated a story of his sexual practices with someone he met on the internet and the boyfriend he had. He narrated that he had sex while doing drugs with a *"random Indian guy"* who was older than he was. When we spoke about condom-use, he explained that he always uses condoms with the exception *"one real real committed relationship"* he was involved in. He narrated:

Yeah, chemsex that was like the whole night, I liked that but I don't do drugs anymore, I just smoke weed but I don't count weed as drugs so yeah. Uhm [...]it happened the year before last year with some random Indian guy, older, but he was drinking and he was 'like let's do chem', and I was like- so I was like 'yeah cool let's do this' then and then ya.

Analysis

Andile seems to struggle to form relationships with gay people. He blames his parents for his failure to form committed and affectionate relationships. He explains himself to have been unfaithful to his boyfriend by having sex with other people. He later wants to form a relationship but finds that other gay men reflect the same kind of sexual behaviour that he displayed. He rejects these man and echoes insulting sentiments. He appears to yearn a relationship that he considers normal, based on characteristics he considers typical of heterosexual relationships. However, he gets involved in the sexual practices that he rejected from the gay men he interacts with on the online social platform. It appears that Andile wishes

to distance himself from gay men however; his isolation leads him to join the online social platform to interact with other gay men and engage in the sexual activities he rejected.

2. Theme: The university space is a safe for transitioning

Andile described the university as a liberal space. He contrasted the space to back home where he grew up with his strict and religious father. He explained that he plans on coming out. Andile mentioned that he was presently comfortable still being in the closet. Andile explained that even though it is safe on campus, there is still prejudice and stereotypes about gay people on campus. He stated that there is less safety outside the campus and gay people need to alter their behaviour. He explained:

> *I know that I'm going to come out of the closet. I'm not going to stay here forever but like right now this is where I'm comfortable and I think I'm transitioning and university has opened my eyes. So there is stereotyping and there is prejudice but it is a lot safer environment than outside. Cause like when I'm on campus I feel like there is this liberty to be whoever I want to be or whoever I'm most comfortable to be. But like when you are outside the streets of Braam you like a lot more composed and a lot more you know?*

Andile applauded people who are openly gay, he contrasted them with those who fear rejection and are thus in the closet. He stated:

> *I was talking about a gay guy on my campus, I mean it takes courage to be openly gay and to not really give a shit about what people think and say about you but I suppose being in the closet, you are like, you are more scared of being rejected.*

Andile explained he heard stories involving discrimination of gay students at the university. He however stated that he has not experienced this directly. He mentioned that some people may doubt that he is gay but they would not mock him because since high school he displayed a fierce character that other people would know not to provoke. Andile explained:

> *I've heard of people who have been discriminated because it's- I'm the kinda person who doesn't take crap, when you did something wrong I will tell you so I think that has set precedence so people know that you don't mess with that one. I've always been friends with the guys. Even in high school, the guys were my friends, even now at university people would see that there is something different about this guy but they wouldn't come mock me or tease me to my face.*

Andile explained the freedom he had to bring gay men where he resides during the university term. He explained not to care what people say or think about him. He contrasts this to back home where his father criticised how Andile behaved because his father cared about other people's opinions. He explained that *"people are narrow-minded back home"* and that everyone is separated by their race and culture unlike the university environment where different people from different places meet.

Analysis

Andile found the university space as liberal and safe. He views the campus as a safe space where people can be open about their sexual orientation. He however acknowledges that there are still cases of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination towards gay people. Andile has noted this kind of hostility back in high school (a story of this will be presented in the next theme) and so he has developed a defence against this hostility by displaying a fierce character that would make other people afraid of being hostile towards him. Andile is careful to restrict this idea of a safe environment of gender and sexuality expression within the walls of the university campus. He recognises that the safety afforded by the university does not apply as soon one leaves the campus into the outside the streets of *"Braam"*. This is where some of the university students reside, catch taxis, shop and meet with friends. However, the environment is not restricted to students. Andile explains that in this space gay people need to be *"composed"*. The word composed is used by Andile here to mean that gay people need to alter their behaviour in order to conform to the gender norms when outside campus. This interpretation will become apparent in the next theme where Andile describes how he undertakes his behaviour in the presence of heterosexual men.

Andile admires gay men who are open about their sexual orientation on campus. According to him, other people's opinions do not bother these men. He seems to desire to be like these openly gay men but he fears rejection from his peers. Andile mentions that he is transitioning. This came after realising that there are diverse ways in which he can view and express himself as opposed to how he was taught back home.

Andile contrasts the freedom he has at the university to meet various kinds of people as opposed to the restricted environment from back home. He came into an environment that allowed him to have the confidence to find himself. At the university space, he got a chance to see many ways of expressing gender and a defiance of the norms to which he was previously exposed. He presents the idea that for him being in the closet is part of a transition, which

comes in stages. The next stage for him is to come out. From Andile's narratives, it becomes apparent that being in the closet and coming out is situated across certain spaces and times.

3. Theme: The university space and networks

Andile moved to the university in Gauteng after dropping out of the university he went to at his home province. He narrated how upon moving to the Gauteng university he met diverse kinds of people who expressed their gender and sexual orientation in diverse ways. Andile went on to explain how he had to decide where in the *"spectrum"* of masculinity and femininity to belong. This also formed part of the networks he chose. Andile narrated that the first few months when he came at the Gauteng university he used to interact mostly with friends he knew from back home. However, as time went by he chose to distance himself from them because he *"can't be living this life that's like sheep"*. He criticised those friends as being too narrow-minded, judgemental and rigid. He decided that he fits in more with heterosexual masculine men who are liberal than effeminate gay men. He explained:

> *...that's what is comfortable, where I am at on the spectrum. Like when I came to Joburg, there was a new niche in life and I would see these guys who are like 'hey!' and I would think, this is not me and then you get friends who are a lot more relaxed. It's not like 'look I'm a homosexual!' I'm just more free, cool to me. I get to be myself. But like when I'm walking on campus I'm not going to walk with my hips, like I'm a bitch or something. I'd walk with my swag walk. Cause at the same time I don't want to be ostracised. You get people who ostracise you because they think just because you are gay you want every man you come across and like 'fuck this shit!', some of these men are like ugly, it's like 'really?'*

Andile narrated how he had to negotiate his behaviour around his heterosexual friends. However, he explained that he is comfortable around them because he grew up with male cousins and brothers. This allowed him he to acquaint himself with how heterosexual men behave and communicate. He narrated that even though he did not have many things in common with them, he has learned to adapt his behaviour around them. He explained how this started in high school, where in the presence of heterosexual boys he would feel uneasy. However, he now feels comfortable around heterosexual men at university, as he has learned to adapt. Andile explained:

I have male cousins, brothers and like I've been with them and like I know how guys are and I know how guys behave and I know what they talk about. So for me to- me to transition and adapt and be this chameleon is easy. So if like I find myself with a group of guys, let's say in class, a lecture or a tut and we are put into groups and I must be with guys, I adapt. I think you learn to adapt. In high school it was awkward at like grade 8 or 9, where you realise that you have nothing in common with these people...

There are things you don't talk about, you have to talk about guy stuff like uhm football, you talk about partying. You don't talk about 'oh I went to this gay club', you know, or I like 'I think this guy is cute'. There are just things that you don't talk about.

When meeting new heterosexual friends, he adapts his behaviour and becomes more conscious of how he portrays himself. He explained:

With my new straight friends I can say I'm a different person because you don't know how people are going to perceive you. Like they may think you want to be laid by them or lay them but once people get to know you better then they can see that you just want to be friends and then I can have room to relax.

Andile said that he is not actively hiding his sexual orientation. He explained how he is no longer under pressure to hide his sexual orientation. However, if someone asked him if he is gay, he would not respond but shy away from the topic or ignore the question. He explained that if someone were to find out and not ask him he would not go out of his way to deny it.

In high school, it was this actively hiding yourself, there was this constant pressure and you have to conceal it and deny it but now it's more like if they ask you something you like laugh 'haha' and not answer the question and you ignore it but if someone finds out you'd be like yeah 'okay sharp'. It's not gonna be like 'I'm gonna go fight and deny it and go clear my name.' I think I'm at the stage where if its gonna happen, it's gonna happen.

You know being in the closet used to bother me. Now you know when you finally see things in a different light. When you get to varsity you finally see life differently, like the stuff just starts appearing in your life, you see things you haven't seen before and you realise that actually fuck that, fuck everything. My attitude is that I don't give a fuck but I'm not at the same time going to go around say 'hey I'm gay look at me I'm gay ooh'

Andile narrated how it is easier for him to be in the closet because he does have a specific group of friends that he is close to and so conversations he usually has revolve around their common interests. He prefers to be alone and only interacts with people during times when they have a specific activity to do with him. He explained:

> *I don't have specific friends. I have people who I do the same courses together, we'd talk in the lectures and if I bump into you outside and say hi, but I don't have a crew who I chill with and do stuff over the weekend. I'm more of a loner. The people I talk with are people who I know on a one to one basis we do something together, we play sports we go to the gym together, we go to school together or some we work together. That's my social group of people.*

When I asked Andile if he is comfortable being seen with gay people on campus, he responded that he does not. However, he does not socialise with them with the exception that, like everyone else, he has a reason to interact with them which involves a shared activity. He narrated a story of how in high school he had to disassociate himself, in public, from a friend who was gay and effeminate, in fear of people thinking he too was gay. He narrated:

> *...in high school, I had this gay friend who was very gay and I wouldn't associate with him in public. But he'd be screaming my name across the fields and call out my name and I would just ignore him and pretend not to hear, but at the weekend I would chill with him and we would talk about everything... With him at that time I was just an idiot, now that I'm out of high school and in a different environment where everyone is different and everyone has their own personality. So now I'm not as scared to associate with- actually I'm not afraid to associate with gay people on campus, but I wouldn't wanna go out of my way to go join a gay crew and click and be friends-friends with them. In class when I need notes or if we come out and end up having a conversation fine. But I'm not going to say 'oh lets GBFFS[9]' you know.*

Analysis

In the story about Andile and his gay friend from high school (G). Andile positions himself as a character who in the space he was in he had to reject G, his friend, in order to protect himself. However, the friend would continue seeing him during weekends. Andile ends the story in

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[9] *GBFFS* = "gay best friends forever".

which his character no longer rejects gay people nor him hiding his sexual orientation. However, he started his sentence by explaining: *"now I'm not as scared"* but changes it to *"actually I'm not afraid...but..."*. This can be attributed to Andile being uncertain about his comfort around gay people.

The university space not only allowed him personal growth but also gave Andile the opportunity to befriend several types of people and form various networks. Andile prefers the company of heterosexual male students over gay students. He is more comfortable with them and has over the years learned to understand how they communicate and adapt his behaviour towards one they can recognise. He chooses not to talk about his sexual orientation because that may be unfamiliar to them and cause him discomfort. He refers to himself as being like a chameleon; being able to adapt to whichever environment he is situated and the people that are there.

Andile seems not to identify much with effeminate gay men but interacts with them. However, if Andile is like a chameleon and changes colours depending on who he is with, one wonders which colour he perceives himself to be, when alone. Andile's narrative may indicate that he is not fully comfortable with his sexual orientation to be able to form friendships with a group of people where he can be himself fully. He would rather isolate himself. He seems worried about people's perceptions of him, distancing himself to any effeminate behaviour that might get him ostracised. He seems to hold the view that heterosexual men are uncomfortable with befriending gay men because they think gay men are attracted them. He does not wish for his heterosexual friends to have this negative misconception of him. For Andile, it seems being in the closet is a protective measure against perceived homophobia.

4. Theme: Negotiation between religion and homosexuality in university space.

Andile narrated how coming to university and being in an academic environment made him to begin questioning his religious beliefs from how he has been *"indoctrinated to believe"* back home. He narrated a story of how his scientist cousin who is religious is negotiating her studies and religious beliefs which, according to Andile, clash. With this observation, he tried to find a way to negotiate the conflict between his homosexual sexual orientation and his religious beliefs. He narrated:

I don't deny God's existence but I'm starting to question it and being in an academic environment [...] My cousin is so religious but now she is doing her PhD in Science and Genetics. I never understood how does she do it, she kinda has to forget, I don't know if she forgets but she finds a way to fit them together. So I'm also realising that you can believe in God in your own way. It's about what do I believe and not what somebody else believes. I'm trying to find God in my own way...

Andile explained how at university he started seeing so many different people with different religions. He stated that he made friends at university with people who are liberal and do not care about other people's religious beliefs. He contrasted that with his high school friends who were *"church junkies"* that condemn people who are not Christian and make statements such as *"Jesus is gonna kill gay people"*. Andile stated that seeing that so many people are not Christian it did not make sense to him for God to *"create a gay person and then condemn that gay person to die"* and to prosecute so many people who are not Christian.

Andile explained that back home his family was strict about going to church dressed formally. He narrated a story of his pastor who saw Andile wear a hat and he humiliated him in front of the congregation. He expressed his shock when he came to a university church service where one of the leaders was wearing a hat and everyone was dressed casually.

I get to Joburg and I see people wear shorts and slops to church, you know and people are taking off their shoes and are walking around the church. I remember one time in high school I went to a youth service on a Friday night and I had this beanie on my head and this pastor decided to rebuke me in front of everyone and humiliate me and now makes the sermon about men should not cover their heads. And here in Joburg, I mean the prayer and worship leader was wearing a beanie and I'm like 'wow!'

Andile narrated how during his adolescence he became aware of his sexual attraction to people of his same sex and because of the Christian beliefs he was taught, he felt guilty. He explained that God made him gay and so he cannot condemn him. Andile narrated:

Growing up when I was like 13 like I wouldn't look at girls, I would look at sexy guys on TV and check them out, all these beautiful men, and get all these attractions and go wank, but afterwards, I would always get those- these feelings of guilt and disgust and bad and I would think I'm condemned but right now I feel if I die and get condemned who is to blame? God is to be blamed because he made me like this and Christian

people- and not just them but also religious people make you feel bad about who you are.

Andile narrated that he was praying for God to help him with financial problems to pay for his university expenses. He explained how after praying he believed God will help him but his problems were not solved. Andile explained to have thought that God was punishing him, a week before the interview. This was after hearing other students debating that gay people are going to be punished by God. He was then frustrated to see heterosexual students living their lives without having to feel punished for their sexual orientation. He narrated:

I thought to myself that I was being punished and I was like 'fuck you God, why the fuck would you want to condemn me for all these emotions and attractions. You are the one who made me like this, if you wanted me to be the way you want then you should have made me like that. Why give me all these so called evil desires of lust!'

...I was reading my bible, I was praying and I was fasting and trusting God for shit and I'm looking around all these fucken people are living their lives and doing whatever they want to and getting what they want and they don't have compensation and here I was tired and trying to be holy thinking I'm going to be celibate, not think about guys and try switch off my attractions and emotions towards guys, not kiss guys or sleep with guys, I'm just going to focus on my studies but still things still went shit...

Andile narrated how he rejected the bible and how other people viewed God. He explained that his conflict is caused by him being indoctrinated by his family to behave in a manner that was in line with Christian values. He explained that he spent years thinking his being gay is wrong and that he became honest with himself.

...I knew God from an external source it's not like I was just walking around and God stopped me and said 'follow me, come be my son'. Because I come from a Christian family that would indoctrinate you with all these Christian values, 'you are not supposed to do this or not supposed to do that according the Bible'. I just think that the Bible is just a bunch of bullshit, I don't mean to sound disrespectful or blasphemous, that's just how I feel. For years I have always thought that my feelings were so wrong but now I'm just being honest with myself.

When I asked him if he still goes to church, he replied: "*I still go to church but I'm also living my life*".

Analysis

In the stories under this theme Andile positions himself as an unknowing character who was brought up to think that there are limited ways in which he can express himself in accordance his Christian beliefs. Andile moves to an environment that breaks some of the norms with which that he was brought up. He then positions himself as a character that can adapt to this change in this environment. He portrays a character that can fight against the social narrative that his religion condemns his sexual attractions and how he acts on them. Andile further positions himself as a victim who works hard to please God but feels punished because of his sexual orientation. To Andile's dismay the other characters who do not have to fight their sexual orientation seem not to be punished.

Andile seems to struggle still in reconciling his religious beliefs with his sexual orientation. Regardless of his assertions that he is being honest with himself and he is living his own life, stories such as his outrage with God signify that there may be a struggle. Andile states that he still goes to church but also lives as a homosexual. He is a first-year university student and who is confronted with conflicting narratives. The one social narrative is that Christianity does not accept homosexuality and the other is that God does not judge homosexuals. Andile has grown up with the former narrative and is later in a university space that challenges that narrative. The second narrative is more liberal. Andile seems to believe that he can follow this narrative however, being in the closet for him meant he has a constant fear of being rejected or condemned.

Although the university space is still liberal, there are still Christian students who still hold the rejecting narrative of homosexuality which continuous to shape Andile's perceptions. Andile interacts with these people when he goes to church and their views are in conflict with Andile's pursuit of harmonising his religion and his sexual orientation. As established in the previous theme, Andile is comfortable around heterosexuals because he can *"adapt"* to communicating about common interests and withhold talking about his sexual orientation. He then begins to doubt whether the liberal narrative he wants to adopt is false because God is not helping him out of his financial problems. Andile positions himself as independently adapting to the change in his new environment about religious beliefs however when he is confronted with the idea of rejection, it appears that he becomes vulnerable again.

Discussion of Andile's narratives

The university space becomes a new space where some gay students first acknowledge their sexual orientation and decide to disclose it to others (Arndt & de Bruin, 2006). The university space is contrasted with their previous spaces at home where there may have been hostility towards gay people. Various literature reports on hostile experiences that gay students in South African universities experience (Graziano, 2004b; Hames, 2004; Msibi, 2011; Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015). Andile's narratives suggest that there is prejudice, stigmatisation and discrimination against gay people, however the university remains a liberal space where gay people are safe to express their sexual orientation. Like Kiguwa's (2015) findings, Andile recognises that the safety of gay students is limited to the university campuses and that outside the university, black gay men still fear for their safety and need to 'go back in their closets'.

Andile defends himself from this hostility by hiding his sexual orientation. Andile explains how outside the university space and at home one needs to be *"composed"*. This phenomenon is discussed by Nel and Judge (2008) to note that due to fears for their safety in public spaces gay people often need to "play down or 'closet' their sexual orientation or gender non-conformity" (p.27). Gay people being in the closet limits the visibility of alternative sexual bodies in an otherwise culturally diverse country like South Africa (Nel & Judge, 2008).

Andile uses internet mobile applications to interact with other gay men and pursues romantic and sexual interactions with them. This is like Kuperberg and Padgett's (2015) study which report that gay students who are in the closet mostly have sex with other gay students through internet sources. Like Andile, participants in Pingel, Bauermesiter, Johns, Eisenberg and Leslie-Santana's (2013) quantitative study found that young gay men experienced using online dating sites as a safe manner of interacting with other gay people, however they were uncomfortable with the overly sexual space that is created. This led to Andile having negative perceptions of the gay community and upholding negative stereotypes.

Similarly, Belous et al.'s (2015) qualitative study in the USA found that gay men who recently become accepting of their sexual orientation still hold negative stereotypes ("such as gay men are sexually immoral") that they heard from their families and religious sources (p.64). However, after being incorporated into the gay community the participants labelled the period from hiding their sexual orientation towards interacting with other gay people as the "transitional phase" where they adhered to their previously held stereotypes and engaged in

risky behaviour and promiscuity (Belous et al., 2015, p.64). Similar wording was used by Andile to describe his coming out process and similarly he got involved in the sexual promiscuity that he previously disliked about gay men.

Andile's narratives confirm that religious beliefs held by some students lead to the discrimination of gay students in South African universities as found by Arndt & de Bruin's (2006) qualitative study based in Gauteng. Subhi and Geelah's (2012) qualitative study in Australia found that gay people who come from religious families and communities had trouble reconciling their taught negative religious beliefs over homosexuality and being homosexual themselves. The incongruence between holding religious values and accepting one's homosexuality affected most participants in Subhi and Geelah's (2012) study. This lead to the participants developing psychological challenges such as depression due to the guilt and isolation they experienced (Subhi & Geelah, 2012).

There is a continuum between embracing being gay and rejecting negative religious beliefs, on one end and on the other end, rejecting being gay and upholding taught religious beliefs against homosexuality (Subhi & Geelah, 2012). This is evident in Andile's narratives where he positions himself as accepting of his sexual orientation and rejecting negative interpretations of his religion's attitude towards homosexuality in one story but also positioning himself as accepting the negative religious interpretations and despising his sexual orientation in another story.

Reflections of Bafana's interview

Bafana was a 21-year-old undergraduate student from a township in a different province from the university. I mention this because he makes a comparison of the two spaces. At the time of the interview, he was doing his third year. I mention this to give an idea of how long his experiences were. The interview with Bafana took approximately one hour and thirty minutes. I began the interview with the two broad questions regarding social experiences and sexual practices. It was the second interview done and I was confident throughout because Bafana appeared to be very eager to share his narratives with me. This was evident from how he chose to begin his interview. From the first question, Bafana narrated many stories relating to the question in a lot of detail. This was followed by lengthy responses to the verifying questions I had. He began the interview by qualifying that he had few sexual experiences to share. He went on to narrate stories about his networks at university and the reasons why he moved to

Gauteng. The interview progressed towards him narrating more stories about how he negotiated hiding his sexual orientation around his male heterosexual friends while being open to his female friends. We went on to talking about his relationships and his closeted gay friends. He further narrated that not only was he is in the closet but how the university space had allowed him to grow into appreciating his sexual orientation and taking *"baby steps"* towards coming out once he leaves the university.

Significant themes from Bafana's interview

1. Homophobia on campus
2. Coming out will disturb the order
3. Preference for female over male university peers
4. Being in the closet and dating

1. Theme: Homophobia on campus.

Bafana explained that he decided against going to the university at his home province for him to be able to explore life as a gay man. He explained that if he went to his hometown university he *"couldn't really do anything because people are watching"*. Moreover, Bafana explained that there is a lot homophobia back home. Bafana explained:

Here in Joburg there are a lot gay people so even if people don't like it they are forced to tolerate it, because everywhere you go you'll see a gay guy, you know, it's like sort of a daily thing. So it's like forcing them to tolerate it. So it's better here. At home where I see how the gay guys are treated, it's very unfair it's better here in Joburg. Like it was going to be worse if I was at home if I was to live the life that I am living.

However, Bafana recognised that there is still homophobia at university. Bafana emphasised that there are efforts by student activist groups and the university management that attempt to make the university a safe space for gay students. He explained however, that the university space remained hostile to gay students. He narrated stories of how he witnessed mockery of gay students in different spaces within the university. Bafana narrated:

...with the students there is still- like there are lot of people who are very ignorant - like you sometimes you just be sitting at Dining Hall and the people who are sitting next to you who aren't sitting really with you, they be like talking about things that as a gay person they're not really nice things. They'll be talking about gay friends as these creatures that don't really deserve to be, you know, to be here in this world. Like lot of people are still discriminating and very ignorant and very judgemental and it's not nice like you know to hear - I guess that's why it's very scary having the idea people finding out about you because you know a lot of people are gonna discriminate you and stuff and so I guess that's why actually a lot of gay guys are still in the closet because it is not really friendly like this environment. [The university] is trying we know that it is really trying it is really trying to make it- to make everybody feel comfortable...

... [The university] does not tolerate like homophobic behaviour on campus. It's the students because we all come from different places. Some come from Limpopo, some from KZN, you know. Probably most of these people were told that being gay is wrong and then they come here with that attitude that if you are gay you're doing a sin and what-not what-not. So it's not really [the university], it's the students like I said. We can't really blame [the university], it's the students at [the university]. Some do understand, we have really nice people who are supportive, even straight guys who go to like gay pride because they have friends or cousins who are gay but we still have a lot of people who are still very ignorant.

Bafana narrated that he defends himself from the hostility by not disclosing his sexual orientation, focusing on his own his academic work, and displaying an intimidating stance when he moves around campus. He explained: "*I look very scary in person like I always have this straight face that says get away from me...*".

Bafana narrated a story involving homophobia from a tutor. He explained how the tutor questioned Bafana's sexual orientation after perceiving Bafana's friend as Bafana's boyfriend. The tutor told Bafana that he was not going to assist Bafana with his academic work if Bafana were gay. Bafana narrated:

...I'm like 'no' he's just my friend and then he's like 'but are you gay?' and I said I'm not gay. He's like 'oh okay that's good because if you're gay I wasn't going to help you'. That's exactly what he said so it's not really a gay friendly environment as we would like to believe – as we would like think it is. There are still a lot people who are still very ignorant.

Bafana narrated how over the years he has matured and become more confident with his sexual orientation. He narrated that one of his new year's resolutions was to attempt to reduce the homophobia amongst the students as much as he can without disclosing his sexual orientation. He narrated stories of how he would challenge his heterosexual acquaintances if they made a negative remark about gay people. He explained that he agreed to participate in this study to make a difference. He narrated:

Like I said I am more confident now than I was in first year that is why I try to challenge these people like 'no you can't say that it is not right' you know. I don't know, it's just something that I have in me because I remember last year -in first year I did a lot things but last year I didn't really do anything and then one of my new year's resolutions this year was to try as much as possible as I can to fight for what matters to me.

And your information is going to be very helpful [...] like if you're doing your research on this...I'm like 'okay maybe what he is doing will kind of make a difference in a way' and like I said one of my new year's resolutions was to try to help as possible as I can, where I can.

Bafana narrated that he interrogated one of his friends on what was perceived to be a homophobic response to a gay student who sat next to them at the Dining Hall. His friend responded that he was not homophobic and Bafana decided to disclose his sexual orientation to him and the two of them remained close friends. He narrated:

I asked him I'm like: 'do you have problem with gay people' and he's like 'no I actually have gay friends'. I'm like 'okay but then why are you acting like this when this person came to sit with us?'. He's like 'no, it wasn't really like that it was something else and then at that moment I felt like it was uhm it was a great time the time for me to actually tell him that 'hey this is the situation' and I like how he handled it. Like he was very chilled we're still very close, like we talk about everything. He' tells me about his heterosexual life, I tell him about my homosexual life. We're really good friends so there are some people who are like not as ignorant as other people so my social life is really, is really fine I don't have any complaints.

Analysis

Although Bafana demonstrates agency in being able to maintain a sense of control in his behaviour in relation to others, in close inspection, Bafana positions himself as a victim and his tutor as an antagonist in that story. Bafana's response to the threat his tutor poses him ends in surrendering to his tutor's criticism. In stories that followed Bafana positions himself as a protagonist who has become brave and stands up against the discrimination of gay students. His friend is positioned initially as a possible antagonist that Bafana challenges only to find out that he is in fact an ally.

On a personal note, this theme illustrates Bafana's maturity as a gay university student. He begins by contesting discrimination despite the hostility towards gay people in his new space. Bafana has stood strong against the discrimination he views other gay students endure. He himself is in a privileged and yet limited position by being in the closet. Bafana perhaps feels a sense of duty to protect the students who have to withstand the rejection that he himself fears.

2. Theme: Coming out will disturb the order.

Bafana narrated that even though he was aware of his sexual orientation during high school he did not want to disclose this to his peers and his mother. He explained that a lot was expected from him and he built an image that everyone respected. Bafana explained that his image would be tainted and people would not view him the same. He explained that he wanted to come to Johannesburg to form a new image where his peers would know of his sexual orientation however; when he came to university he stayed in the closet to avoid rejection. He explained:

Had anyone found out about my sexuality it was going to be a mess like it's going to be - I don't' know my life in school wasn't going to be the same so that is why I wanted to come here to Joburg and to live my life and be myself. But the problem I made again in first year was not being clean because now I feel like it's high school all over again it's going to be hard for me to now tell the people that I'm gay.

...I know lot of people, I made lot of friends I guess the fear is not only for people to like know and you know like lot of people are still very ignorant - lot of people are still very judgemental - lot of people still don't understand. I guess it's not only about me being afraid of being discriminated by people who don't really know me but it also - like I'm afraid of

some reject from the people I've met like from my friends that I have now, what will they do if they found out.

Bafana narrated that his mother and little sister look up to him and he is not ready to disclose his sexual orientation to them. Bafana also explained that he withdraws from becoming openly gay because if he joins the gay community he will become susceptible to possible HIV acquisition. This will further disappoint his mother. He narrated:

So sometimes when I want to do something I tend to think like what if I make that one mistake and things go wrong you know what if I get HIV or something by just one mistake along the way and you know it wasn't the people at home say - you know I should be a good example to my baby sister and my mom believes in me a lot...so I guess that's one of the reasons why I tend to stay uptight and not really out there and be doing lot of things. I am very focused because I always remember what I came here for.

Bafana explained that there is a student from his hometown and if she finds out about Bafana's sexual orientation, she might let the people from back home know and the news might reach Bafana's mother. He narrated:

...should she hear anything she would really run and tell and be like a huge story at - back at home like among the people that I know people would talk a lot. So I guess it's one of the reasons why I'm scared because they may end up getting to my mom and I'm not ready for that. I'm not ready for her - I'm sure she probably suspects I don't know but she hasn't asked me but I'm not ready to tell her - I'm not.

Bafana explained that he plans to come out to his mother once he has completed his degree and left university. He narrated:

I'm planning on telling my mom and I feel like once my mother knows then who's everyone else I mean the only concern now is that she would find out from just some random person that's the scariest thing. But if she knew I'd probably be open right now as we speak like I guess one of the main reasons I'm still in the closet is because she doesn't know.

He explained that he will also be openly gay in the workplace. Bafana explained to have disagreed with a friend of his who thinks people may not respect Bafana if they knew he is gay. Bafana narrated:

'What happens in the work place if people don't respect you, if they know about your sexuality?' I'm like 'but then at the workplace things are different. If you are somebody's

boss, if you say do this, whether they like you or not they have to-they will have to do that they have to do it.' So it's not only that but it's not only that, it's about you yourself you wouldn't even care at that point because having been through that high school thing and university thing and experiencing that and at that point you don't really care like the older you get and the more matured you and you don't really care about a lot unnecessary things

After leaving university and being in the workplace Bafana planned to come out and marry a man. He narrated:

I am gonna date guys, I am gonna marry a guy one day, I see myself marrying a guy but right now- I feel like I will get to that point where I'm open, really open that I would post a picture of myself with a guy. I feel like I'm not there yet. I feel like it's baby steps.

Analysis

In the stories under this theme Bafana seems to position himself as a character who is highly regarded by other characters at home. However, maintaining this character meant he had to keep his sexual orientation a secret. He came to university willing to risk other characters not perceiving him highly but he feared their rejection as he decided to live as he did in high school. Nonetheless, he positions himself as a developing character who is growing to become comfortable with other characters having knowledge of his sexual orientation. This however, he bases on the hope that he would be in a position of power in the work place and his mother would accept his sexual orientation.

Bafana appears to value other people's opinions highly. He therefore decided against disclosing his sexual orientation to his peers at university; he feared the risk of being rejected. Bafana had previously imagined the university space as one in which he could express his sexual orientation without discrimination. However, this turned out not be the case and so he decided to continue hiding his sexual orientation until he moved out of the university space. Bafana feels secured in the closet against the negative opinions he perceives he will receive from other people. He appears to assume that he would be comfortable being openly gay in the work place because he will be in a position of power. This position will force other people to respect him regardless of his sexual orientation. Coming out for Bafana appears to be a step-by-step process.

3. Theme: Preference for female over male university peers.

Bafana explained that he prefers the company of his female peers above his male peers. He did not associate with openly gay men but he associates with gay men who are in the closet. Bafana disclosed his sexual orientation to two of his female friends and one of his heterosexual male friends. Even with hiding his sexual orientation, Bafana expressed that he is content with his social experiences at university. Bafana narrated:

I prefer to actually have friends who are - who are - girls than have gay friends because- I do have I do have uh some guys who are like me, not - who are still in closet and stuff like that but I really prefer to have friends who are girls than friends who are who are gay….

I have already told a few of my friends that 'hey guys this is um this is the situation'. Some of my close friends know but those are only the people that are like me but my straight friends - only one knows but most of them they still don't know...

Bafana narrated how he had to change residences in his first year at university because the residence he stayed at was for male students only. He explained being uncomfortable having to conform to the heterosexual men he befriended there. He then moved to a residence that accommodated both male and female students. He narrated:

...I wasn't really feeling comfortable there like it was a all-guys res only and then um, I everywhere I go I tend to like make friends easily and then I make friends there and then somehow these friends they were like those guys who are like - who like girls a lot so like when they have like parties they would get a lot of girls and stuff like that. So if I'm, I'm around they would expect me to do the same so it was kind of that I was expected to do certain things and then when I was doing them they would have questions like 'why are you not doing, why you not doing that this'. So I really kind of didn't feel comfortable there so that's why I moved to a place where I felt like okay it was a mixed res so I didn't really know anyone there apart from a friend of mine I met there and then yeah I feel like okay at least here I can have my freedom no one is asking me anything, I'm not expected to do anything...

Bafana explained that he attempted to befriend gay people but he struggled fitting in with them because he is in the closet. Similarly, he cannot be associating with them a lot because people might begin to question if he too is gay.

I want to avoid drama and I know that most gay people they come with lot of drama so I guess for them on that side - that's why I try to minimise the kind of gay friends I have

and also I'm still in the closet - I don't want to be having like all gay friends now like people will know.

Bafana also explained that he could not be seen with his gay male friends who are in the closet because if people find out about that friend they would suspect that he too is gay. Therefore, his closeted gay friends avoid each other. He explained:

If you are always seen with that guy like there is a risk that, what happens if people find out about him, they would probably gonna conclude about you like oh that's why they always chill together and stuff like that. So even if we do know each other we would try avoid each other...

Bafana explained that he was content being friends with his two female friends. When he does get free time, he goes out to *"straight clubs"* with his two female friends outside the university vicinity. However, he remains in the closet there. He explained:

...the friends that I do have now like I realise we have a lot of things in common we have this - kind of guys we like and you know the kind of goals that we have - kind of have lot of things in common. I guess in the beginning when I wanted girls - friends who were girls - it was me trying to be like you know when they go out I'm the only guy and then of course we won't go to gay clubs we go to straight clubs...

Analysis

In these and other instances, Bafana positions himself as a character who has the freedom to decide with whom he associates and disassociates. He disassociates himself from characters that threaten his comfort zone. He disassociates himself from some heterosexual men because they expect him to behave in a manner he is not comfortable. He also disassociates himself from openly gay men and closeted gay men because they threaten the comfort he has of being in the closet. Bafana is most comfortable with his female peers because they are accommodating to his need to be in the closet.

Bafana's university networks are limited because he is in the closet. He however seems to have adapted to the restrictions he experiences concerning his social experiences. He has made conscious decisions to negotiate being in the closet and being content with his social life. He has done this by distancing himself from spaces focusing on his school work and having a part-time job seems to be a way he can isolate himself from having to adopt a heterosexual character amongst his heterosexual friends.

4. Theme: Being in the closet and dating.

Bafana explained that coming to Johannesburg from a small town, he had various images of how he was going to express his sexuality. He narrated that he met gay friends who are in the closet. These friends warned him against getting sexually involved with other gay people to protect himself from contracting HIV and getting hurt in a relationship with someone. His friends also advised against him being known by many gay people because they risk telling people that Bafana is gay. Bafana explained that this was because a lot of men showed an interest in him. Bafana explained that he is grateful that he got advice from his friends who had negative experiences so that he does not. He narrated:

...when you come here in Joburg as a young gay man but you meet lots of people who want to do lots of things with you and most of these people are working people - people who are very experienced... But because I had friends- friends who you know are like 'no you don't do this you do that I'. I was very grateful and then after that, after my first-year experience I learnt lot of things that's why even now in terms of dating I'm very, I'm very- I don't really date a lot and it's not that- well I don't really date a lot because somehow I feel like I'm trying to protect myself from everything that is going on in this city. And you know I mean it is very dangerous in the gay community to be um, to be doing lot of things with a lot of people because when we read the statistics – there's a lot of HIV in the gay community. So I guess one of the reasons why uhm I don't date much it is because I'm trying to protect myself.

I met this guy he was doing second year and then he had really been hurt like before by the guys that he used to date. So he'd tell me a lot of stories like um you know what he did what that guy did and what he wished he could have done stuff like that so yeah I met and he told me lot of things and you sometimes don't really - it's very nice to learn from your own experience but if you can really avoid something why do you want to put yourself through that.

Bafana narrated stories of how he went against his friends' advice, met a gay man and went on a trip with him. He later realised that the man was in another relationship. This upset Bafana. He narrated that as time went by he felt lonely and decided to find and talk to a lot of men on Facebook. He narrated:

I knew it was wrong. But at the time I felt there was really nothing else I could do because I was really lonely and I needed someone and that is the thing about being in the closet is that it is not easy to date - it is not easy to date because most of the time the guys who are available they are very open with their sexuality and you don't really want to be seen with them because people will start asking questions. So when you in the closet it isn't really easy to date so I guess that's why I had to do that.

Bafana narrated a story that occurred prior to his coming to Johannesburg. He narrated that he met a gay man at his hometown who explained to him his experiences of being gay in Johannesburg and the dangers that come with being involved with the gay community. Bafana explained that he rarely formed relationships with gay men and even if he did he does not have sexual intercourse with them. He explained that most gay men have a lot sexual experiences because they have been involved in the gay community. He explained that he has been told stories about sexual promiscuity and infidelity in gay relationships. He explained that it is going to be difficult for him to trust in a relationship with a gay man who has had a lot of sexual experience.

...even the guys that I've dated I didn't have sexual intercourse with them I didn't really sleep with them so I didn't really have lot of experience so it would be scary for me to meet someone who is way over experienced. Who's done a lot of things I haven't really done things I don't even know about that I still to learn - I guess I'm still to - discover a lot of things in the gay community... yeah people who've had lot of sexual experience...I feel like for me it - it's going to be very hard to trust someone who's like - who knows lot of people in the gay community because I know I've been told how like how people do things like people are not as faithful in the gay community people tend to cheat a lot and do a lot of things...

Analysis

Bafana positions his character as novice in expressing his sexuality. His character has been told negative stories about the gay community that he fears to experience himself. He positions his friends as protagonists and the gay community as antagonists. His friends have been victims of unfortunate events involving characters of the gay community and they seek to protect Bafana from experiencing what they have experienced.

Bafana appears to have been taught by other gay men's narratives about being involved with openly gay people who are named *"the gay community"*. Bafana being concerned about other people's opinions and lacking *"sexual experience"* has developed a fear of expressing his

sexuality with openly gay man. He seeks to protect himself from negative perceptions from people, other people knowing that he is gay and contracting HIV.

Discussion of Bafana's narratives

Bafana's social experiences at university are informed by his recognition that there are still negative attitudes and experiences that openly gay students face for expressing their sexual orientation. Although being in the closet gives him a sense of protection against being victimised, he is aware that openly gay students still face victimisation. His narratives point to the heterosexist and homophobic attitudes that still prevail in South African universities.

Bafana's narratives highlight the importance of LGBTIQA+ organisations at university advocating for change in university policies to accommodate gay students. These organisations have been found to offer gay students a sense of support in dealing with challenges based on their sexual orientation (Graziano, 2004b). Students who were part of LGBTIQA+ organisations were found to have developed positive self-images and a higher self-esteem. The organisations help gay students, who are accepting of their sexual orientation but still in the closet, gain a sense of acquaintanceship but also in giving them a purpose in advocating for the rights of gay students. Although they would not participate in public campaigns in fear of discrimination as Graziano (2004b) found.

Bafana's narratives confirm Arndt & de Bruin's (2006) findings that some heterosexual students are accepting gay students, more especially female students. However, most students still hold negative attitudes towards gay students (Jagessar & Msibi, 2015). Bafana's narratives also highlight that homophobia and heterosexism is not only exhibited by students but by academic staff as well (Rothmann & Simmonds, 2015). Bafana reacts to hostility towards gay people by challenging homophobic statements but by also removing himself from spaces such as male residences where gay students often experience homophobic attacks (Graziano, 2004b; Msibi, 2011). Furthermore, he explains that cultural and linguistic diversities are present amongst students in South African universities (Cross, 2004) these often come with students who come from cultures where homophobia is normalised.

Reflections of Cele's interview

Cele was a 24-year-old full time postgraduate student at the time of the interview. During the university term, he stayed at a student accommodation outside the university. He grew up in a township in Gauteng but a different city to the university. The interview with Cele took approximately 3 hours. He expressed his nervousness before beginning the interview. He needed clarity about what I meant by social experiences. I explained to him that I am interested in understanding his social interactions at university. Cele expressed that the questions are too broad and that he does not know where to start. I explained to him the nature of narrative interviews and that he takes control over the interview. He then expressed that he understood. He began the interview by stating that he does not like to consider himself as gay but simply as a man who is interested in other men. Cele then narrated stories about the move from home to experiencing university for the first time. He explained his desire to socialise with other gay people after leaving home. Cele narrated stories of his encounter with an online chatroom application and the various individuals he met via that medium. He narrated various stories relating to his sexual experiences and then went on to explain his social experiences of being in the closet amongst his university friends.

Cele's tone stayed enthusiastic throughout the interview. He laughed numerous times in the interview and at certain points it was due to his embarrassment over certain facts he told. Having told no one else the stories, he shared with me voluminous stories about his sexual experiences. The most prominent feature about the interview with Cele was that he gave fewer descriptions of his experiences but rather narrated numerous stories. He would move around stories because he forgot to add on something to an initial story. I often got confused throughout the interview. I had to ask for clarity about which years some of the stories where situated. This was the fourth interview in the study and it was carried out efficiently. It is important to note that most of the stories Cele narrated are situated within his undergraduate years. As a postgraduate student, he had coursework seminars to attend during the week but also had a job off campus. At the time of the interview he lived at home.

Significant themes from Cele's interview

1. Discomfort from having sexual intercourse with men
2. Having girlfriends to hide being gay
3. Coming out in stages and fitting in with heterosexual friends
4. Negotiating dating men and being in the closet

1. Theme: Discomfort from having sexual intercourse with men.

Cele explained that he had his first sexual experience when he came to university. He narrated that he met a gay man on an online chatroom application. He went to the gay man's house but the morning after he felt guilt and shame based on his religious beliefs condemning sexual relationships between two men. He narrated:

Yeah and we had sex. I-I liked it. But the next morning I didn't feel comfortable – like I didn't – I didn't like the experience. Well, I liked– I don't know how to explain it – I liked it when we did it but the next morning comes - come to think of it, it's like 'what did I do?'...You know this gay thing, I am a Christian...when I grew up you know this man-to-man thing is not accepted

I felt ashamed of what – of what I did and then that year I think I didn't date any guys it was like I was trying – I was trying to figure myself out like what's wrong with me.

Cele explained he has not been comfortable having sex with another man until a week before we did the interview, five years after his first gay sexual experience. Before that, he narrated that he would be pressured to have anal sex because he would be in relationships were his partners wanted to have sex. Cele narrated stories of how he would be in relationships but attempted to avoid having sexual intercourse. Cele explained that he is a receptive partner in his sexual relationships. He would find the practice painful but explained that: *"I had to bottom there was no other way"* because he was inexperienced in gay sexual practices. Cele further narrated:

...now, I think it has changed because of you know experience. Cause like let's say until last week that's when I started to realise that I can take this – I can be sexually active with a guy and see nothing wrong with it. I would get attracted to guys but not sexually. Someone will want to date me, I would date but not go there so you know with guys, "arg ah wena wa bora[10] *you don't wanna have sex you always have excuses, everytime you don't want to meet in private"- cause you know I have this like phobia-nyana*[11] *about having sex with a guy...*

Yoh! It was so painful – it was more painful compared to the first one. I think it depends on the guy's dick ((laughs)). Yeah, so – yeah, so, it was more painful and yeah I - I remember I bled, like I – like on the sheets. Because it was too painful, like I told you, um but I was strong, um, then from there who did I meet – after then I kept on going onto 2go[12] *you know, expressing my, you know, my other side that a lot of people really don't know about it.*

...one thing I didn't like about the chatroom is that everyone is looking for sex and I told you ho re it wasn't my thing like I would like a guy and I wanted to kiss the guy or touch him but not go there.

Analysis

In the stories Cele narrated above, he positions his character as conflicted between his religious beliefs and his sexual orientation. Furthermore, his character is pressured to conform to the sexual practices of other gay men for them to be in relationships with him. Cele positions his character to have later gained experience and thus conform to those sexual practices. Cele seemed uncomfortable having sexual intercourse with other men. This appears to be due to the conflict between the actual physical practice and the mental and emotional aftermath. The conflict seems to come from Cele feeling that his sexual practices are not in accordance with what he has been taught as moral by his religion. Cele had therefore developed fear or a bit of a *"phobia"* for having sexual intercourse with a man which makes the experience not pleasurable for him. He seems to want to explore a romantic but not sexual relationship with other men. His desire was to explore his hidden sexual orientation however, this led him to keep interacting with more gay men on chatroom applications. He explained to

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[10] Translation: "*arg ah wena wa bora*" = arg you are boring
[11] Translation: "*phobia-nyana*"= a little phobia
[12] 2go is a chatroom application

have developed comfort with the idea of having sexual intercourse with another man a week before the interview.

2. Theme: Having girlfriends to hide being gay.

Cele explained that he had girlfriends or pretended to have girlfriends so that his friends would assume that he is not gay. He narrated a story where he introduced a female friend with whom he is close to as his girlfriend to his male friends at university. He explained: "*I would take my friends there and I lie and say ke girlfriend ya ka*[13] ". He narrated how at first merely showing interest in girls by commenting on their looks was sufficient but later he was questioned why he did not bring a girl to his student accommodation. Cele explained: "*you'd say that that girl is pretty and approach her but they never see a girl visiting in your room...* ". He then decided to meet girls at clubs and have sex with them. He narrated:

I had to get-to get this other girlfriend – I didn't like her but she had to be my girlfriend[...] but I wanted someone to fill in the gap I was missing in my life – not someone important missing but someone who would just close that void that would silence people...

Cele explained that since he got closer to exploring his sexual orientation he struggled being sexually aroused by girls when planning to have sex. Cele narrated:

I had some girls I didn't love them, I just fucked them [...] there was a point where – where, where I didn't know what was happening with this girl or what but I wasn't horny ((laughs)) and she wanted to have sex so I made an excuse – an excuse – like, 'the condom doesn't work for me and I'd like to have sex with you but obviously we can't have sex without a condom'. And then she was like, 'Is there something wrong with me?' like I think I was becoming more into guys now than chicks back then. I had to go to the clinic and buy those tablets ((laughs)) to make my dick get up so I can get horny so I can go fuck this girl just for her. Cause I also felt guilty with what happened and also so she doesn't tell her friends what happened and they would be like 'eh chomi maybe he's gay, he's gay chomi' you know when those girls talk and yeah.

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[13] Translation: "*ke girlfriend ya ka*" = *She is my girlfriend*

3. Theme: Coming out in stages and fitting in with heterosexual friends

Cele explained that he has been coming out in stages. However, the more he accepts a gay identity the more he felt excluded from his heterosexual friends. Cele explained:

So I also feel excluded, because now, now I'm thinking on that transition thing I'm I'm on another level I'm no longer on that level cause remember I'm more mature I'm not on that stage when I got here I was like toddler stage, now I'm like I feel like I'm I'm a teenager ((laughs)) at that time I think I was 10 ((laughs)) ...

Cele narrated stories illustrating various times when he was uncomfortable being around some of his friends and not fitting in. He explained that he later made gay friends but most of his friends remained heterosexual. He narrated instances where his heterosexual friend would see a gay student passing by and make homophobic comments; his other friends would also make similar comments. Cele explained how he too had to add a negative comment but would feel a sense of guilt. He explained: "*I would also comment even though I knew it was wrong*".

Analysis

In the stories Cele narrated above it seems that Cele positions himself as a character who is maturing into finding an identity that is different from the other characters who are heterosexual. The other characters are positioned as antagonists who are hostile to the identity towards which he is developing. It appears that the more Cele came to terms with his sexual orientation the less he fitted in with his heterosexual friends. His own journey towards living life as an openly gay man is hindered by his association with his heterosexual friends.

4. Theme: Negotiating dating men and being in the closet

Cele narrated stories of how he had to hide his relationships with men from his heterosexual friends. His boyfriends would want to meet at his student accommodation but he would be afraid to take them there. In his first year, Cele and his friends were always together and so

when he had to go see his boyfriend he needed to make an excuse about where he was going. He narrated:

...I met this guy in Soweto, who was older than me, we met on 2go- I had deleted 2go but I got it back, when I deleted it was because I thought ho re this thing ke bosatane[14] *[...] And he's like let me take you where you stay. Like 'he- no – no – no', like I mean what would my friends say. Like I told you we were always together, so now I just lied to say where I was going, So, yeah from there I started dating this guy. So weekends I would tell my friends I was going home but I was going to Soweto.*

Cele narrated that he was in a relationship with another man who was also in the closet but stayed with his wife. He and Cele had troubles about where they would meet. He also had a problem with being seen with him in public because the man has gay friends and Cele would not want to be seen with them. He explained, *"I've got a problem with him and me in public – I don't want people to see him and me in public – I'm embarrassed of him – I'm not okay with this gay situation I'm not out".*

Cele narrated another story of a boyfriend who would call him a lot. He had to save his number under a girl's name because his friends kept questioning who the person that kept calling him is. He narrated:

I had this thing of when I was away from him I wouldn't talk to him and when I'm with my friends, he would call a lot to the point that I would store his number as something else. I would say [Mmabatho] or [Tshidi] and my friends would ask 'who's this chick?' and I would- you know just take a random picture from the girls that I know I would be like 'ke o'[15] *and they would be like 'oh ok'.*

Analysis

In these stories, Cele positions himself as a protagonist who lives a double life. He needs to hide his relationships from the other characters who are positioned as inquisitive. Cele seems to be trapped by the expectations of his heterosexual friends. He is also not okay with his gay sexual orientation as he explained. This seemed to leave him associating with his heterosexual friends even though he needs to put in mechanisms to hide his relationships with

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[14] "I thought ho re this thing ke bosatane" - I thought that this thing is Satanic.
[15] Translation: *'ke o'* = This is her.

gay men. Furthermore, his friends questioned his sexual orientation hence they seem to be inquisitive.

Discussion of Cele's narratives

Cele's narratives are important in understanding the sexual experiences and practices of black gay men. Cele's first time sexual experience is like Collier et al.'s (2015) findings that receptive anal sex partners may find the experience as painful and traumatic and yet pleasurable. The pain and bleeding is expected and normalised with the reason that receptive partners are having sex as women (Collier et al., 2015)

Cele's narratives also confirm the interpersonal dynamics of power and pleasure during anal sex between men that is discussed by Kiguwa (2015), that being a receptive partner in anal intercourse may be interpreted as a loss of power or agency. Cele's narrated experiences of having sex with older men affirms findings of a USA qualitative study by Johns, Pingel, Eisenberg, Santana & Bauermeister (2012). Johns et al. (2012) found age to be an influencing factor in the decision of who the receptive or insertive partner is in anal sex with men. Older men were assumed to be the insertive partner by virtue of their experience. Insertive partners' characteristics such as penis size influences the pain that receptive partners experience (Johns et al., 2012). They would often show physical dominance during the sexual encounters causing receptive partners to experience pain (Johns et al., 2012). Age then becomes an indicator of power within gay men's sexual experiences (Johns et al., 2012).

The experience of pain was found to be one of the factors that influenced receptive partners' decision to withdraw from engaging in anal sexual intercourse (Collier et al., 2015). However, DuBois's (2015) qualitative study in the USA found that young gay men would begin to have sex out of curiosity, however the decision to continue or withdraw from having sex came from external pressure. Like Cele, participants in DuBois's (2015) study continued to have anal sex due to the pressure of pleasing their romantic partner and a desire to form a connection with gay men. Like Cele, the pressure of fitting in with heterosexual friends lead to gay students having sex with girls to hide their sexual orientation (Belous et al., 2015).

Conclusion

This chapter looked at the narratives of four black gay university students. The chapter presented significant themes within the study participants. An analysis of the emerging

themes was included for each theme followed by a discussion of each participant's narratives compared to previous literature.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

Introduction

This chapter will begin by discussing related topics of discussions that emerged across all the participants' narratives as well as the information that they shared about their social spaces at university. The chapter will also discuss the implications and limitations of the study and offer recommendations for future research.

General Conclusions

There are various topics of discussion that the narratives of Dingane, Andile, Cele and Bafana highlight regarding the social experiences and sexual practices of black gay university students who are in the closet. Andile, Dingane and Bafana's narratives highlight that there are still negative attitudes and experiences that openly gay students face at university for expressing their sexual orientation. Their narratives point to the heteronormative attitudes emanating from their home environments. The participants' narratives seem to suggest that although the university environment may be hostile; there are mechanisms that can be used to make their social experiences more positive, including forming networks with other gay students in the closet (Taulke-Johnson, 2008). Although they did not report extreme victimisation that they experienced themselves, the awareness of such victimisation lead them to continue hiding their sexual orientation.

The participants' narratives point to the heterosexist and homophobic attitudes that still prevail in South African universities and the country at large. The participants expressed how other openly gay students were meted with hostility which further reinforced the perception that the university space is still not a safe space to come out. This further contributes to existing literature that maintains many universities in South Africa still perpetuate heteronormativity and thus marginalise openly gay students because of their sexual orientation (Jagessar & Msibi, 2015; Rothman & Simmonds, 2015). As with all the participants in this study, the university space was generally perceived an unwelcoming space for some gay students to be open about their sexual orientation thus causing them to isolate themselves from other gay students and

interact with their heterosexual friends as a defence mechanism (Adamcyzk & Pitt, 2009; Graziano, 2004b; Sumeru, 2012).

However, the university space was not reported completely as a hostile environment by the participants. Instead, Andile and Bafana noted that gay students at their university experience positive support from different people in the university. For example, Bafana praises transformation policies and LGBTIQA+ organisations for advocating for gay students' rights and safety. The participants' positive narratives highlight that enjoyment of black gay students' rights and safety becomes limited when they exit the university space to go home. Gay men in South Africa have legal protection from discrimination based on their sexual orientation and they are entitled to basic human rights as enshrined in the South African Bill of Rights (de Vos, 2009). However, the homophobia in certain areas of the country still hinder enjoyment of their rights (de Vos, 2009). This further draws the limitations of policy if not followed by practice. The participants' narratives show that although South African black gay men may have limited enjoyment of their rights through university policies and organisations that protect them; this enjoyment disappears when they exit the university space.

Outside the university, some black students have to return to interact with less accommodating spaces within their black communities (township and rural areas). In these spaces, gay men fear for their safety (Kiguwa, 2015). Some of these South African township and rural areas remain entrenched with cultures that perpetuate hegemonic masculinity and heterosexism (Ritcher & Morrel, 2006, Morrel, 2001) as well as homophobic attacks (Graziano, 2004a; Mkhize et al., 2010; Msibi, 2009; Wells & Polders, 2008). Emerging from this landscape, the participants reported various spaces where they could not express their identities. This is consistent with literature which shows that the cultural diversity that South Africa is known for is limited because gay students must adapt their behaviour to hide their sexuality within their communities (Nel & Judge, 2008)

The participants' narratives highlight the role of power that is rooted in dominant narratives of masculinity. As men, gay men may gain privilege from hegemonic masculinity however they are equally oppressed if they display effeminate behaviour (Taywaditep, 2002). This finding further coincides with Moolman's (2013) study which notes that black gay men's sexual identities are diverse and "articulated through class, and hence, gay masculinities in townships and informal settlements do not have access to authority and even legitimacy in the same way that middle-class gay men do" (p103). Moolman further (2013) explains this form

of intersectionality in South Africa as oppressions that some people experience due to historical discourses of race and apartheid. Therefore, in South Africa, black gay men experience intersectional challenges because of their race, socio-economic status, gender as well as sexual orientation (Graziano, 2004a; Kiguwa, 2015; Moolman, 2013; Msibi, 2009).

The results show that religion still plays a significant role in the experiences of gay men and their interpersonal relationships with their family and community members (Afshar, 2006; Etengoff & Daiute, 2014). Religion has been the basis of homophobic attacks, discrimination and stigmatisation of gay students by university staff and students in some South African universities who hold homophobic views (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015). In this study, religious intolerance from families and communities where they came from attributed to the guilt and shame that Andile and Cele felt over their sexual orientation and sexual practices (Subhi & Geelah, 2012). This finding further intensifies how religious intolerance that gay men grow up with leads them having to negotiate their beliefs with their sexuality, the irresolution of this leaving them distressed (Levy & Reeves, 2011; Subhi & Geelah, 2012). Most importantly, religious beliefs, enforced on heterosexual students entering the university space, brings with them harmful attitudes that perpetuate homophobia in South African universities

This study shows that dominant social narratives still shape how gay men negotiate sexual intimacy. For example, Cele and Dingane confirm that heteronormative scripts and hegemonic masculinity have been found to play out in the sexual practices of black gay men (Kiguwa, 2015; Collier et al., 2015). This shows that they continuously viewed themselves and others in relation to dominant narratives of masculinity which positioned them as inferior to their heterosexual counterparts. This finding shows that both heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity are linked with unequal gender relations that privilege heterosexual men's power over women and homosexuals (Weizenzimmer & Twill,2015; Pascoe,2013). This power dynamic is evidenced in gay sexual intercourse where sexual partners assume sexual roles based on gender scripts (DuBois et al., 2015; Kiguwa, 2015; Pachankis et al., 2013). The labels top and bottom are usually used in describing the sexual practices of gay men as well as their behaviour and identification (Gil, 2007). The top partner is categorised as the insertive partner in anal sexual intercourse and is characterised as having traits that are stereotyped as masculine such as aggression and dominance (Gil, 2007; Kiguwa, 2015; Collier et al., 2015). The bottom partner is categorised as the receptive partner in anal sexual intercourse and is characterised with traits that are stereotyped as feminine such as passivity and submission (Gil, 2007; Kiguwa, 2015; Pachankis et al., 2013). The traits given to bottom partners are argued to be

associated with a relinquishment of power and agency due to femininity being viewed as subordinate (Kiguwa, 2015)

The participants' narratives also highlight narratives of pain and pleasure when negotiating sex and pleasure. For example, Cele's narratives highlight that receptive partners need to negotiate how the experience or pleasure while having sexual intercourse with insertive partners (Collier et al., 2015). In some South African townships, anal sexual intercourse has been found to be associated with displeasure and pain by black gay sexual partners (Collier et al., 2015). Black gay bottoming students were found to form relationships with top identifying partners (who are masculine) to feel safe when in hostile spaces (Kiguwa, 2015). Like Cele, some receptive partners continue to engage in sex due to relationship pressures in pleasing their partners who are often older and experienced (DuBois, et al., 2015). This finding further signifies the power struggles between top and bottom social determinants based on social scripts of gender.

Like the participants in this study, some gay men are not always comfortable with having anal sexual intercourse (DuBois et al., 2015). Amongst the reasons given in my study were a clash with religious morals, a lack of interest; fear of contracting HIV, internalised guilt, pain, and a lack of opportunities to meet sexual partners. These reasons mirror those found in previous literature (DuBois et al., 2015; Pachankis et al., 2013; Sánchez et al., 2016). The reasons given in this study also highlight the social and cultural challenges that impact on gay men's sexual experiences such as heteronormativity, homophobia and religion.

All the participants' narratives suggest that being in the closet limits their networks within the university setting. For example, Dingane and Andile's narratives show that societal perpetuation of stereotypes that gay men are effeminate become a threat to closeted gay men's masculinity thus leading them to disassociate themselves from effeminate gay men and hold femmephobic attitudes (Hunt, Fasoli, Carnaghi & Cadinu, 2016). The participants had to be mainly associated with their heterosexual friends. This limited them from forming more networks with other gay students and exploring their sexuality openly. As a way of forming gay sexual networks, participants made use of internet sources such as dating applications and online social networking websites (Blackwell et al., 2014; Kuperberg & Padgett, 2015).

Internet sources fulfilled various social and sexual needs which the participants could not express in public spaces. Andile, Cele and Dingane confirm the importance of these internet sources in allowing young gay men to explore their sexuality in a relatively anonymous and

safe space. Furthermore, these spaces assist gay men to validate that their sexual attractions are shared by others and therefore normal (Pingel, Bauermeister, Johns, Eisenberg & Leslie-Santana, 2013). These online spaces are predominately used to meet sexual partners, leading to some gay men who are not interested in sex to find the space discomforting (Pingel et al., 2013).

Femmephobia was also found to influence gay men's sexual experiences and practices (Kuperberg & Padgett,2015; Miller & Behmn-Morawitz, 2016; Taywaditep, 2002). The participants reported how gay internet sites were filled with femmephobia which resulted in some gay men feeling marginalised and discriminated against should they display or be assumed to display effeminate behaviour (Taywaditep, 2002). The participants narratives also show that some gay men often display femmephobic behaviour as a defence mechanism against the childhood ridicule that they experienced for displaying feminine behaviour themselves (Taywaditep,2002). These gay men were found to be overly conscious of presenting themselves as masculine (Taywaditep, 2002). This study shows that this preoccupation can become part of their self-concept and thus leading them to continuously be conscious of presenting themselves in a masculine manner in accordance to societal scripts of masculinity (Taywaditep, 2002).

There are different theories on how to explain gay men's coming out of the closet (Arndt & de Bruin,2006). However, the narratives of all the participants in this study indicate that from their perspective coming out is a developmental step-by-step process. This is consistent with the Homosexuality Identity Model (Cass,1984). Yet, other literature also shows that coming out can alternatively be viewed as an ongoing process where all gay individuals need to observe their situated space and decide whether to disclose, avoid disclosing, or conceal their sexual orientation (Herdt and Boxer, 1993). Regardless of how coming out can be theorised, the social space in which the black gay university students within this study were situated still informed their decision to disclose or conceal their sexuality. This decision was based on the perception of their environment and interactions being welcoming or hostile towards gay people. This highlights the importance of creating safe spaces for black gay men to express their sexuality, both within the universities and the broader South African communities.

Implications

This research was case-study orientated, however as established, narratives are informed by the social and cultural contexts in which the participants' experiences are situated. In this regard, the analysis of the participants' narratives has implications on various aspects of South African societies. This research highlights the urgent need for universities to tackle homophobia within their campuses by implementing and bringing awareness to any current protective policies against the abuse of gay students. The study shows that universities need to encourage religious students to be more tolerant towards different sexualities and not impose their beliefs on students who hold different beliefs. If no policies are present, policies that can create a safe space for university students to express their sexuality warrant creation. This also highlights the awareness of the means to access available resources and support structures within the universities where gay students can gain a sense of support. If no resources and support structures for gay students are absent, they should be considered.

Furthermore, the research also highlights the short-comings of current legislation in South Africa which aims to protect gay people's lived experiences. South African communities need to create safe spaces for black gay men to express their sexuality visibility, therefore bringing into awareness different forms of masculinities and other gender scripts. The challenge of femmephobia found through the participants' narratives also point to the need of LGBTIQA+ organisations to not only deal with discrimination from outside the gay communities, but also tackle forms of discrimination that occurs amongst gay people. These organisations need to provide knowledge on communicating safer and more informed sexual practices amongst gay men. Relatedly, gay men should be encouraged to communicate their needs of pleasure within safe and protected sexual relations. The government should recognise shortfalls such as the availability of condoms and the lack of lubricants within most black communities. These preventative mechanisms can assist in the combat of HIV and AIDS through safer sexual practices.

Recommendations

Further research is encouraged to always consider intersectional factors that shape the experiences of black people in a culturally diverse country such as South Africa. A longitudinal study that looks at the experiences of black gay university students once they enter into the workplace would add on to the knowledge created in this research. Furthermore, future research

can look into the experiences of openly gay university students who have sexual relationships with other gay students who are in the closet.

Limitations

Due to the narrative methodology of this study and word count constraints on the report, each case study could not receive in-depth analysis. The participants in this study come from two different universities, which although are in close proximity, may have different social and cultural relations. This study may also hide the experiences of other gay students of different races. Due to the sensitivity of the sexual topic around men who have sex with men, this study may have contributed limited knowledge of the sexual practices of black gay men with participants reporting selectively of their true sexual experiences.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a discussion of the conclusions that can be derived from the narratives that occurred amongst all the participants with the aim of providing better knowledge into their social spaces. The implications and limitations of the study were presented as well as recommendations for future research.

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Appendix A

Department of Psychology

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

Participation Information Sheet

Dear Potential Research Participant

My name is Putuke Kekana. I am currently doing my Masters in Social and Psychological Research student at the University of the Witwatersrand. Under the supervision of Prof. Mzikazi Nduna and Dr Janan Dietrich, I am conducting research for the purpose of obtaining this degree. The intention of my research is to explore the sexual and social experiences of young black gay university students who are discreet (i.e. in the closet) about their sexual orientation. Findings from the research will be written up as a Research Essay to be submitted for examination and will be published on the Wits Library website. I may also write a journal article for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. In order to participate in the study you will be need to be a self-identified black gay man between the ages of 18 to 24, be a full-time university student at Wits University or the University of Johannesburg. You would need to be sexually active and be 'in the closet'. Participation in this study will involve an in-depth interview, which will be conducted by me. The interview will require you to tell personal stories about yourself, your sexual practices and social experiences at university. The interview should take approximately 1 hour and will be scheduled at your convenience. Participation is voluntary and you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to take part in the research. You may withdraw from participation at any time during the interview, without any consequences. You may also choose not to answer a question if you do not feel comfortable. The interview will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. Only my

supervisor, a research assistant and I will have access to the transcriptions. The audio recordings and transcripts will be kept in a password-protected file on my personal computer. Your anonymity when reporting the results of the study will be maintained by referring to you as Participant A, B, C, etc. Any identifying information will be purged or will be disguised so that you cannot be identified.

A feedback sheet in the form of a summary of the research and its findings will be provided to you upon request, approximately 6 months after the collection of the data. You may e-mail or phone my supervisor or I should you wish to receive this. Our contact details appear below.

If you feel distressed upon completion of the interview, the following organisations may be contacted. These organisations are based in and around Johannesburg and provide free support and counselling.

LifeLine:	(011) 728-1331
The Gay and Lesbian Helpline (Triangle Project):	(021) 712 6699
CCDU (Wits West Campus):	(011) 717 9140/32
Emthojeni Clinic (Wits East Campus):	(011) 717 4513
PsyCad(UJ Apk Campus)	(011) 559 3324

Before beginning the interview, it is required that you read through and sign the two attached consent forms. These forms simply confirm that you are aware of everything that we have discussed concerning confidentiality, feedback and privacy. Please detach and keep this sheet.

Kind Regards,

Putuke Kekana

0729430086

Putuke.kekana@students.wits.ac.za

Prof. Mzikazi M (Supervisor) Dr Janan Dietrich (Co-supervisor)

Mzikazi.Nduna@wits.ac.za Janan.Dietrich@mail.phru.co.za

Appendix B

Department of Psychology

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

Participation Consent Form

I, _____ consent to taking part in the research project being conducted by Putuke Kekana, on the sexual and social experiences of young black gay university students who are discreet about their sexual orientation. I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary.
- I may refrain from answering any questions.
- I may withdraw my participation and/or my responses from the study at any time during the interview, without consequence.
- There are no risks or benefits associated with this study.
- None of my identifiable information will be included in the research report.
- I may be quoted in the research report, however, a pseudonym (Participant A or Participant B etc.) will be used.
- All extraneous persons referred to in the research interview will be given a pseudonym.
- I am aware that the results of the study will be reported in the form of a Research Essay, which forms part of the requirements for the completion of the Masters in Social and Psychological Research degree.
- I am aware that a copy of the report will be placed on the University of the Witwatersrand's library website.
- The Research Essay will be available in the library at The University of The Witwatersrand, which is accessible to the public and may also be presented at a local/international conference and published in a journal and/or book chapter.
- The audio recordings and transcripts of my interview will not be seen or heard by anyone other than the researcher, his supervisors and a research assistant.

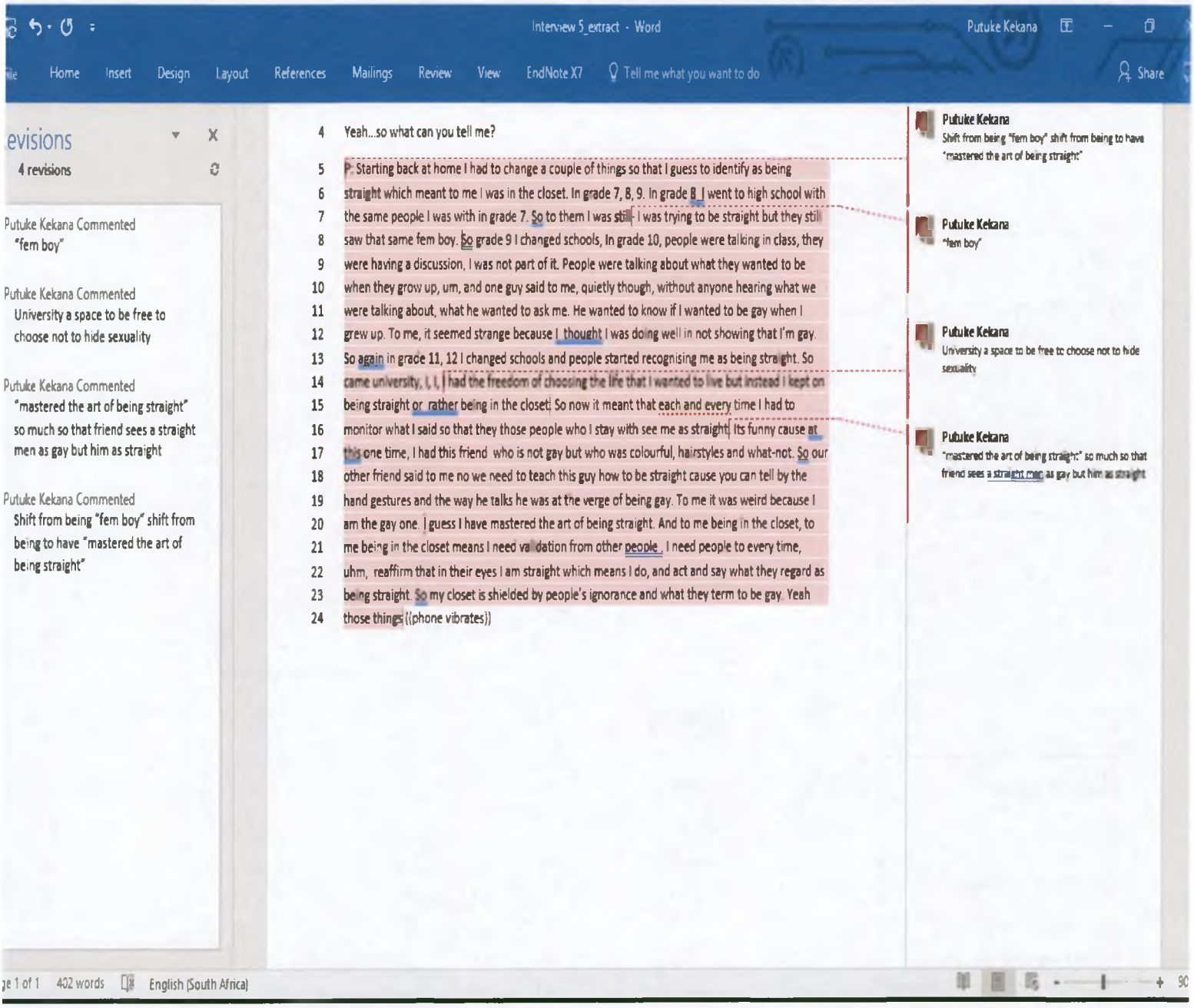
- The audio recordings and transcripts of my interview will be kept in a password protected file on my personal computer for three years, for research publishing purposes, and will be destroyed thereafter.

Appendix C

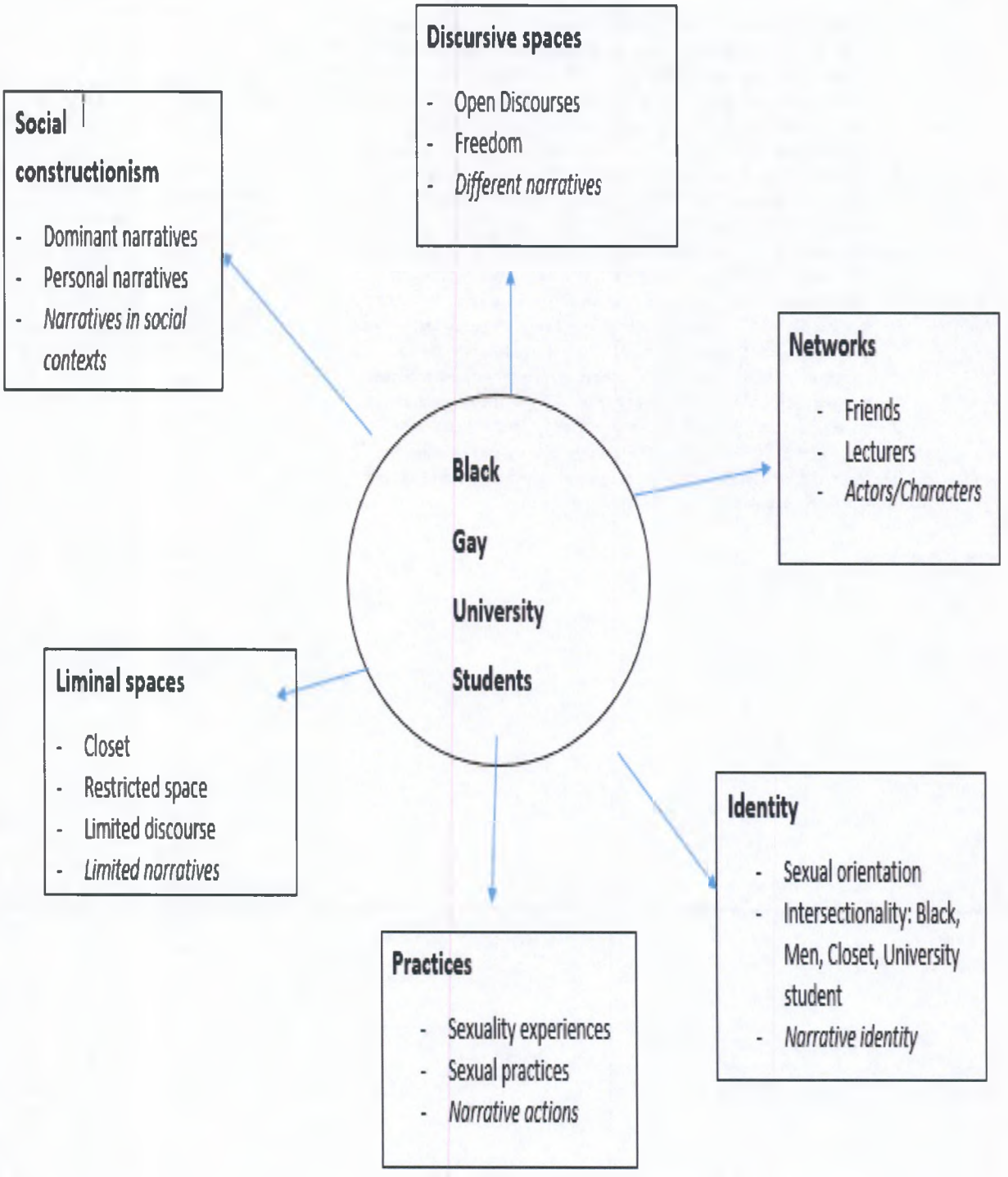
Interview Schedule

- Please tell me about your experiences as a black gay university student who is in the closet.
- Please tell me about your sex life.

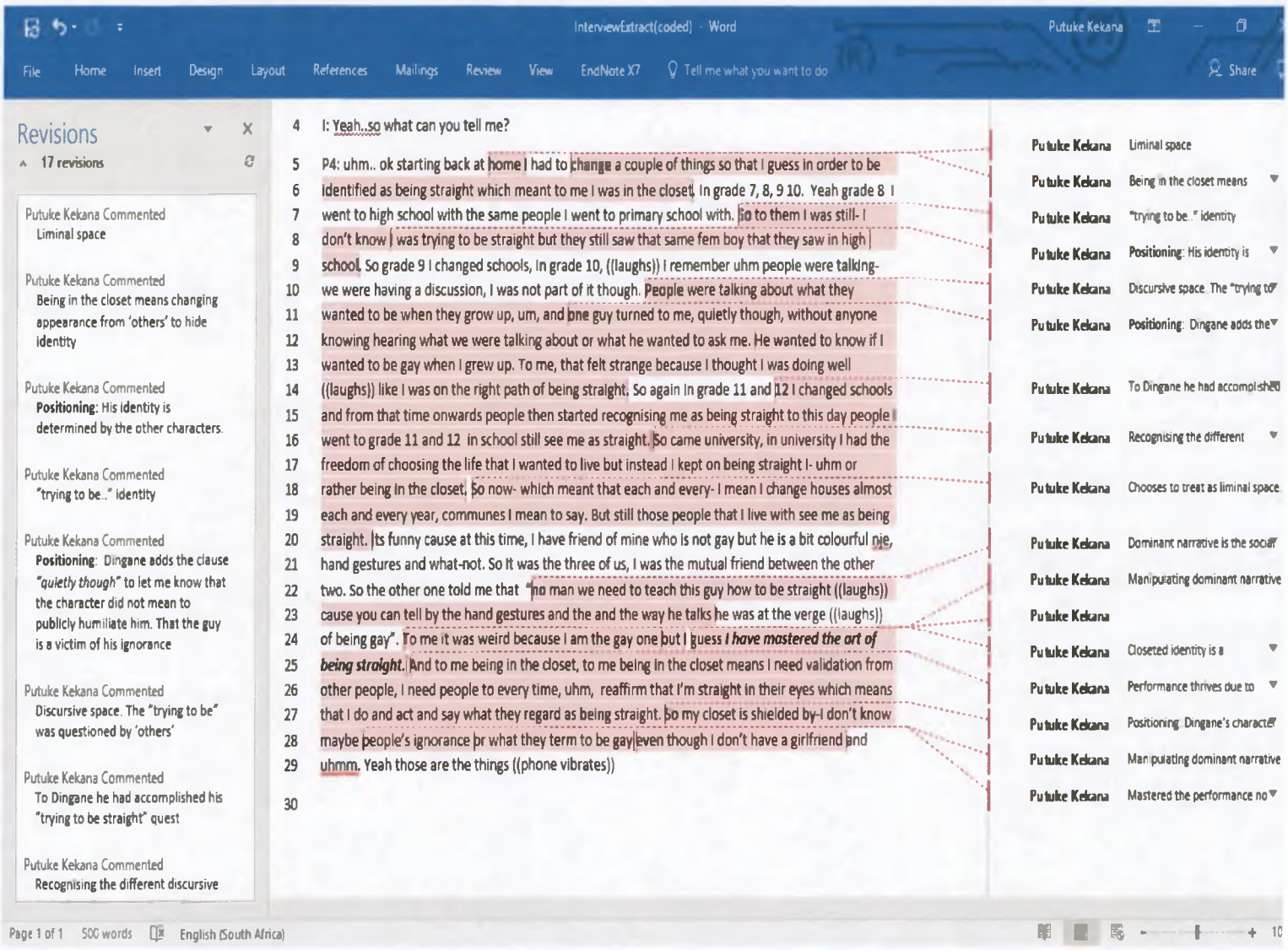
Appendix D


Interview 5_extract - Word
Putuke Kekana
Home
Insert
Design
Layout
References
Mailings
Review
View
EndNote X7
Tell me what you want to do
Share
evisions
4 revisions
Putuke Kekana Commented
"fem boy"
Putuke Kekana Commented
University a space to be free to choose not to hide sexuality
Putuke Kekana Commented
"mastered the art of being straight" so much so that friend sees a straight men as gay but him as straight
Putuke Kekana Commented
Shift from being "fem boy" shift from being to have "mastered the art of being straight"
4 Yeah...so what can you tell me?
5 P: Starting back at home I had to change a couple of things so that I guess to identify as being
6 straight which meant to me I was in the closet. In grade 7, 8, 9. In grade 8 I went to high school with
7 the same people I was with in grade 7. So to them I was still I was trying to be straight but they still
8 saw that same fem boy. So grade 9 I changed schools, In grade 10, people were talking in class, they
9 were having a discussion, I was not part of it. People were talking about what they wanted to be
10 when they grow up, um, and one guy said to me, quietly though, without anyone hearing what we
11 were talking about, what he wanted to ask me. He wanted to know if I wanted to be gay when I
12 grew up. To me, it seemed strange because I thought I was doing well in not showing that I'm gay.
13 So again in grade 11, 12 I changed schools and people started recognising me as being straight. So
14 came university, I, I, I had the freedom of choosing the life that I wanted to live but instead I kept on
15 being straight or rather being in the closet So now it meant that each and every time I had to
16 monitor what I said so that they those people who I stay with see me as straight Its funny cause at
17 this one time, I had this friend who is not gay but who was colourful, hairstyles and what-not. So our
18 other friend said to me no we need to teach this guy how to be straight cause you can tell by the
19 hand gestures and the way he talks he was at the verge of being gay. To me it was weird because I
20 am the gay one. I guess I have mastered the art of being straight. And to me being in the closet, to
21 me being in the closet means I need validation from other people . I need people to every time,
22 uhm, reaffirm that in their eyes I am straight which means I do, and act and say what they regard as
23 being straight. So my closet is shielded by people's ignorance and what they term to be gay. Yeah
24 those things ((phone vibrates))
Putuke Kekana
Shift from being "fem boy" shift from being to have "mastered the art of being straight"
Putuke Kekana
"fem boy"
Putuke Kekana
University a space to be free to choose not to hide sexuality
Putuke Kekana
"mastered the art of being straight" so much so that friend sees a straight men as gay but him as straight
ge 1 of 1
402 words
English (South Africa)

Appendix E


Discursive spaces
- Open Discourses
- Freedom
- Different narratives
Social constructionism
- Dominant narratives
- Personal narratives
- Narratives in social contexts
Networks
- Friends
- Lecturers
- Actors/Characters
Black
Gay
University
Students
Liminal spaces
- Closet
- Restricted space
- Limited discourse
- Limited narratives
Identity
- Sexual orientation
- Intersectionality: Black, Men, Closet, University student
- Narrative identity
Practices
- Sexuality experiences
- Sexual practices
- Narrative actions

Appendix F


InterviewExtract(coded) - Word
Putuke Kekana
File Home Insert Design Layout References Mailings Review View EndNote X7 Tell me what you want to do Share
Revisions
17 revisions
Putuke Kekana Commented
Liminal space
Putuke Kekana Commented
Being in the closet means changing appearance from 'others' to hide identity
Putuke Kekana Commented
Positioning: His identity is determined by the other characters.
Putuke Kekana Commented
"trying to be.." identity
Putuke Kekana Commented
Positioning: Dingane adds the clause "quietly though" to let me know that the character did not mean to publicly humiliate him. That the guy is a victim of his ignorance
Putuke Kekana Commented
Discursive space. The "trying to be" was questioned by 'others'
Putuke Kekana Commented
To Dingane he had accomplished his "trying to be straight" quest
Putuke Kekana Commented
Recognising the different discursive
4 I: Yeah..so what can you tell me?
5 P4: uhm.. ok starting back at home I had to change a couple of things so that I guess in order to be
6 identified as being straight which meant to me I was in the closet. In grade 7, 8, 9 10. Yeah grade 8 I
7 went to high school with the same people I went to primary school with. So to them I was still- I
8 don't know I was trying to be straight but they still saw that same fem boy that they saw in high
9 school. So grade 9 I changed schools, in grade 10, ((laughs)) I remember uhm people were talking-
10 we were having a discussion, I was not part of it though. People were talking about what they
11 wanted to be when they grow up, um, and one guy turned to me, quietly though, without anyone
12 knowing hearing what we were talking about or what he wanted to ask me. He wanted to know if I
13 wanted to be gay when I grew up. To me, that felt strange because I thought I was doing well
14 ((laughs)) like I was on the right path of being straight. So again in grade 11 and 12 I changed schools
15 and from that time onwards people then started recognising me as being straight to this day people
16 went to grade 11 and 12 in school still see me as straight. So came university, in university I had the
17 freedom of choosing the life that I wanted to live but instead I kept on being straight I- uhm or
18 rather being in the closet, So now- which meant that each and every- I mean I change houses almost
19 each and every year, communes I mean to say. But still those people that I live with see me as being
20 straight. Its funny cause at this time, I have friend of mine who is not gay but he is a bit colourful nie,
21 hand gestures and what-not. So it was the three of us, I was the mutual friend between the other
22 two. So the other one told me that "no man we need to teach this guy how to be straight ((laughs))
23 cause you can tell by the hand gestures and the and the way he talks he was at the verge ((laughs))
24 of being gay". To me it was weird because I am the gay one but I guess I have mastered the art of
25 being straight. And to me being in the closet, to me being in the closet means I need validation from
26 other people, I need people to every time, uhm, reaffirm that I'm straight in their eyes which means
27 that I do and act and say what they regard as being straight. So my closet is shielded by-I don't know
28 maybe people's ignorance or what they term to be gay even though I don't have a girlfriend and
29 uhmm. Yeah those are the things ((phone vibrates))
30
Putuke Kekana Liminal space
Putuke Kekana Being in the closet means
Putuke Kekana "trying to be.." identity
Putuke Kekana Positioning: His identity is
Putuke Kekana Discursive space. The "trying to
Putuke Kekana Positioning: Dingane adds the
Putuke Kekana To Dingane he had accomplished
Putuke Kekana Recognising the different
Putuke Kekana Chooses to treat as liminal space
Putuke Kekana Dominant narrative is the social
Putuke Kekana Manipulating dominant narrative
Putuke Kekana
Putuke Kekana Closeted identity is a
Putuke Kekana Performance thrives due to
Putuke Kekana Positioning: Dingane's character
Putuke Kekana Manipulating dominant narrative
Putuke Kekana Mastered the performance no
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